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# SEXUALITY-- THEOLOGY-- PRIESTHOOD

*Reflections on the Ordination of Women to the Priesthood*

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*Eric Mascall.*

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## PREFACE

The remarkable thing about this material on the question of the ordination of women to the priesthood is that the contributors, although divided in church allegiance (being Anglican, Orthodox, Protestant and Roman Catholic), are of the same mind regarding this question; nor is their conviction affected by age, the young contributors being in their 20's, the others in their 50's and 60's.

The language of these articles is, of course, theological. This will not please those who are of the opinion of the members of the Task Force to study the status of women in the Diocese of Pennsylvania who said: "We reject out of hand any arguments or efforts on theological or historical grounds." How are we Christians to talk to each other except theologically?

It is wrong to say there are no theological arguments against the ordination of women to the priesthood. The most recent one I learned from *The Rev. Dr. E. L. Mascall's* letter to me: "There is one point that I wish I had made more explicit, namely, that if the supporters of women priests are right, then our Lord in instituting an exclusively male apostolate was doing something which has deprived half the members of the Church from their legitimate rights for nearly 2000 years. And it would be difficult in that case to feel very confident of either his moral or his intellectual integrity. And then it is difficult to see why we should attribute any authority to him at all."

Rational arguments don't carry much weight with irrational and sentimental people. Socrates already warned of those who had "more zeal than knowledge." Screaming for action is not part of the Christian's life-style, which is informed by "speaking the truth in love," calmness, and trust in the living Lord of the Church.

The above mentioned "task force" (Diocese of Pennsylvania) also felt that the Church "must be prepared to take the risk of schism." On the contrary, we pray at every Eucharist for the "spirit of truth, unity and concord," and when we pray especially for the Church we say: "Where it is divided, reunite it."

Professor Mascall in October 1972 asked of *Cardinal Willebrands* when he was at Lambeth Palace what Rome's attitude would be if Anglicans purported to ordain women as priests. The Cardinal would only say, *but said it with great emphasis*, that Rome would herself never do such a thing, for it was theologically wrong. He seemed to give the impression that such a thing would decisively divide us.

I hope that these essays and speeches will contribute to a deeper understanding of the gravity and great seriousness of the issues involved.

(The Reverend) H. KARL LUTGE, Ph.D.  
*Compiler and Editor*

# Women as Priests?

By the REV. HAROLD RILEY

This article, published by the Church Literature Association, London, has been sent to every member of the Synod of the Church of England in the form of a brochure.

The Rev. Harold Riley, a priest of the Church of England, is Vicar of St. Augustine's, Kilburn, London. He is a Prebendary (i.e. Honorary Canon) of St. Paul's Cathedral and Prolocutor of the Lower House of the Convocation of Canterbury.

He is a member of the Standing Committee of the General Synod, of the Canon Law Commission, and was a member of the first Anglican-Methodist Committee in the Church of England. He was sometime Secretary of the Church Union.

He is the author of *The Revision of the Psalter*, *The Eucharistic Year*, etc., and Joint Editor of *The Acts of the Convocations of Canterbury and York*.

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## 1. What are we being asked?

The Church of England, with other provinces of the Anglican Communion, has been asked by the Anglican Consultative Council to say what it thinks about the possible ordination of women to the priesthood. For the second time in this century a Bishop of Hongkong has purported to ordain two women to the priesthood, and there are those who ask whether the Church is merely being old-fashioned and out of line with the spirit of the times, by confining its priesthood to men.

There are really two questions:

- i. Can women be ordained as priests?
- ii. Should women be so ordained?

If the answer to the first question is No, the second question does not arise. If it is Yes, the second question has still to be answered.

## 2. Would this be a radical change for the Church?

Until the action at Hongkong, the Anglican communion, in common with the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox and the Old Catholic Churches, has always confined its priesthood to men. To do otherwise, as Archbishop William Temple has said, would be "most certainly contrary to all the laws and precedents of the Church." What is now being asked is that those laws should be changed in the Anglican Churches, and those precedents ignored.

## 3. Where does the burden of proof lie?

When so radical a change is suggested, and compelling reasons for

or against a change have to be produced, does the burden of proof lie on those who maintain the age-long practice of the Church, or on those who seek to abandon it? Clearly there have to be very compelling reasons for reversing what the Church has always taken for granted.

#### *4. Where should we look for guidance?*

Christians will want to look for guidance to what the Gospels tell us about our Lord, to what the Bible and especially the New Testament has to say, and to the tradition of the Church through the ages. We need to know what is justified on biblical and theological principle, and not merely on sociological considerations of what would seem to be "practical."

The Christian priesthood is more than a profession; and arguments from the extension of other professions, such as those of doctors or lawyers, are beside the point.

#### *5. Ought the Church of England to "go it alone"?*

As the Church of England, and the Anglican communion, claim to be part of the whole Catholic Church, ought it to assume the responsibility of altering Catholic practice so drastically? The late Dr. N. P. Williams has written: "Those who venerate the example of Christ, the commands of St. Paul, and the practice of the Church, will feel that no power short of an Ecumenical Council—perhaps only an Ecumenical Council enlightened by a special revelation of the will of God—could dare to assume the responsibility of modifying or altering what comes to us upon authority so mysterious and august."

#### *6. How would other Churches be affected?*

We have to recognise that if the Church of England did admit women to its priesthood, a new and formidable barrier would have been set up between ourselves on the one side, and the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches on the other; and these comprise a large majority of the Christians of the world. We must also realise that our present relations of full communion with Old Catholic and some other episcopal Churches would be broken. A fresh cause of division would have arisen at a time when relations with other Churches are getting closer and mutual misunderstandings and differences are being removed.

#### *7. Why did our Lord choose men as his Apostles?*

Our Lord chose men to be his Apostles. Was this merely because of the conditions of the first century? Our Lord certainly did not just conform to the usages of his age, and was quite capable of breaking through the conventions of his surroundings. And as it was indeed in "the fulness of time"—the appropriate age—when he appeared in the world according to the divine purpose, we cannot assume that the conditions of a different age would have provided the opportunity for the fulfilment of his purposes. The Christian priesthood is an extension of the apostolic commission, and we cannot now depart from its inherent character.

It is not surprising that when one had to be chosen to take the place of Judas Iscariot, to be with the Eleven a witness to Christ's resurrection and to be numbered with the Apostles, no suggestion was made that any of the women such as Mary Magdalene, who had seen the risen Lord, should be considered; it was instead to be "one of the men" (Acts I.21) who had to be chosen. At each stage, from the Old Testament ministry to our Lord, and through the Apostles to the Church, we find consistency in a continuing principle.

#### 8. *What about St. Paul?*

The Pauline letters deal with questions arising in the life of the early Church, and it is not surprising that it is in them that we find instructions about its organisation, and among them instructions limiting the conduct of Christian worship to men. St. Paul is quite clear that "in Christ there is neither male nor female" (Gal. 3.28), but the fact that he states so when he is speaking of membership in the Church makes it all the more significant that in other letters he insists that women are excluded from the liturgical functions of the ministry. The various references (e.g. I Cor. 11.3-16; 1 Cor. 14.34-35) arise out of situations which needed his guidance, and they have a common basis. The precise circumstances may now have only a historical interest, but what lies behind the Apostle's directions is of permanent importance.

We come to this clearly in two passages: first, in 1 Cor. 11.3: "I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God"; and secondly in Eph.5.22-23: "The husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church, his body, and is himself its Saviour". The Report of the Archbishop's Commission in 1966, entitled *Women in Holy Orders*, comments: "Perhaps the one entirely certain deduction from the New Testament evidence is that St. Paul believed women to be subordinate to men because this is involved in their role as wives and mothers". What we need to be clear about is what "subordination" means, or keeping to the Pauline words, what is implied in the word "head." We have to avoid connotations from current usage as in "headmaster." We are familiar enough with the idea of the father being the "head" of the family, and recognise that this is his appropriate role. Even when the mother is the more forceful character, we still so regard the father, and know how easily criticism arises if he fails in this respect. We can see this as something symbolic—but symbols are of very great importance.

It is sometimes admitted that this should apply to a family, and suggested that it has not relevance outside the family, as St. Paul was speaking of wives and husbands. But what is expressed in terms of the family depends on an underlying principle of human sexuality, and the symbolism applies with equal force to the family of God which is the Church.

#### 9. *What about the Tradition of the Church?*

The only examples of a female priesthood in ancient times are those found in heretical sects. The tradition of the Church has been constant

in limiting the Sacred Ministry to men. Church authors have argued from the standpoints of their own times or interests in defence of the Church's practice. They have been constant in upholding it, and have taken for granted that this is part of the Christian lifestyle. Like the observance of Sunday or the practice of monogamy, (for neither of which is there a direct command in the New Testament) the limitation of the priesthood to men has been defended as part of the ethos of the Church. "We recognise no other practice, nor do the churches of God". (1 Cor.11.16 RSV).

#### *10. Do practical difficulties matter?*

That in any case there would be practical problems in a system with women priests is obvious. For instance, unless they had to be unmarried, there would be the dual loyalty of home and husband, and the Church. But the real issue is one of Christian principle, based on the Bible and theology. That there are sociological difficulties also is only natural when we remember that the same God is Lord of the Church and of the world, and that the Church is set in the context of all human life.

#### *11. Is there not a proper Ministry of Women?*

One unfortunate effect of the present raising of this matter is that not enough attention has been paid to the question of the proper role of women in the whole ministering of the Church to mankind. It is this to which attention ought to be paid when the present controversy has been put out of the way. There are ways of service which are not open to men as they are to women, and it is these which need to be explored.

# Concerning Women's Ordination

## *Letter to an Episcopal Friend*

By the RIGHT REVEREND ALEXANDER SCHMEMANN

Dr. Schmemmann, S.T.D., LL.D., D.D., is Dean of St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary in Crestwood, N.Y., where he also occupies the chair of Liturgical and Pastoral Theology.

Born in Estonia, he received his education in Paris. After completing his Baccalaureate in Philosophy, he graduated from the St. Sergius Theological Institute in 1945 and in the same year was appointed to the Institute's Faculty as Lecturer in Church History.

In 1951 he joined St. Vladimir's Theological Seminary as Professor of Liturgical Theology. In 1962 he was appointed Dean of the Seminary. In 1959 he was granted the degree of Doctor of Theology. Since 1958 he has been Adjunct Professor at the Graduate Faculty of Columbia University and was Lecturer in Eastern Orthodoxy at Union Theological Seminary.

He is a former member of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches and attended the assemblies of Amsterdam, Lund, Evanston, Oberlin and Montreal. He is a member of the Study and Planning Committee of the Standing Conference of the Orthodox Bishops in America; of the Metropolitan Council of the Orthodox Church in America, and of the American Theological Society.

His publications in English include: *The Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy* (1963), *Sacraments and Orthodoxy* (1965), *Ultimate Questions* (1965), *Introduction to Liturgical Theology* (1966), and *Great Lent* (1969).

He is also a member of the editorial boards of *The Journal of Ecumenical Studies and Worship*.

Because of his learning, wit, and personal warmth, he has been a very popular lecturer at the General Theological Seminary, which awarded him an honorary degree.

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Dear Friend:

When you asked me to outline the Orthodox reaction to the idea of women's ordination to the priesthood, I thought at first that to do so would not be too difficult. It is not difficult, indeed, simply to state that the Orthodox Church is *against* women's priesthood and to enumerate as fully as possible the dogmatical, canonical, and spiritual reasons for that opposition. On second thought, however, I became convinced that such an answer would be not only useless, but even harmful. Useless,



because all such "formal reasons"—scriptural, traditional, canonical—are well known to the advocates of women's ordination, as is also well known our general ecclesiological stand which, depending on their mood and current priorities, our Western Brothers either hail as Orthodoxy's "main ecumenical contribution" or dismiss as archaic, narrow-minded, and irrelevant. Harmful, because true formally, this answer would still vitiate the real Orthodox position by reducing it to a theological context and perspective, alien to the Orthodox mind. For the Orthodox Church has never faced this question, it is for us totally extrinsic, a *casus irrealis* for which we find no basis, no terms of reference in our Tradition, in the very experience of the Church, and for the discussion of which we are therefore simply not prepared.

Such is then my difficulty. I cannot discuss the problem itself because to do so would necessitate the elucidation of our approach—not to women and to priesthood only—but, above all to God in his Triune Life, to Creation, Fall and Redemption, to the Church and the mystery of her life, to the deification of man and the consummation of all things in Christ. Short of all this it would remain incomprehensible, I am sure, why the ordination of women to priesthood is tantamount for us to a radical and irreparable mutilation of the entire faith, the rejection of the whole Scripture, and, needless to say, the end of all "dialogues" . . . Short of all this my answer will sound like another "conservative" and "traditional" defense of the *status quo*, of precisely that which many Christians today, having heard it too many times, reject as hypocrisy, lack of openness to God's will, blindness to the world, etc. Obviously enough those who reject Tradition would not listen once more to an argument *ex traditione*. . . .

But to what will they listen? Our amazement—and the Orthodox reaction is above all that of amazement—is precisely about the change and, to us, incomprehensible hastiness with which the question of women's ordination was, first, accepted as an issue, then quickly reduced to the level of a disciplinary "matter" and finally identified as an issue of policy to be dealt with by a vote! In this strange situation all I can do is to try to convey to you this amazement by briefly enumerating its main "components" as I see and understand them.

The first dimension of our amazement can be termed "ecumenical." The debate on women's ordination reveals something which we have suspected for a long time but which now is confirmed beyond any doubt: the total truly built-in indifference of the Christian West to anything beyond the sphere of its own problematics, of its own experience. I can only repeat here what I have said before: even the so-called "ecumenical movement," notwithstanding its claims to the contrary, has always been, and still is, a purely Western phenomenon, based on Western presuppositions and determined by a specifically Western agenda. This is not "pride" or "arrogance." On the contrary, the Christian West is almost obsessed with a guilt complex and enjoys nothing better than self-criticism and self-condemnation. It is rather a total inability to transcend itself, to accept the simple idea that its own

experience, problems, thoughtforms and priorities may not be universal, that they themselves may need to be evaluated and judged in the light of a truly universal, truly "Catholic" experience. Western Christians would almost enthusiastically judge and condemn themselves, but on their own terms, within their own hopelessly "Western" perspective. Thus when they decide—on the basis of their own possibly limited and fragmented, specifically Western, "cultural situation"—that they must "repair" injustices made to women, they plan to do it immediately without even asking what the "others" may think about it, and are sincerely amazed and even saddened by lack, on the part of these "others," of ecumenical spirit, sympathy and comprehension.

Personally, I have often enough criticized the historical limitations of the Orthodox mentality not to have the right to say in all sincerity that to me the debate on women's ordination seems to be *provincial*, deeply marked, and even determined by Western self-centeredness and self-sufficiency, by a naive, almost childish, conviction that every "trend" in the Western culture justifies a radical rethinking of the entire Christian tradition. How many such "trends" we have witnessed during the last decades of our troubled century! How many corresponding "theologies"! The difference this time, however, is that one deals in this particular debate not with a passing intellectual and academic "fad" like "death of God," "secular city," "celebration of life" etc.—which, after it has produced a couple of ephemeral best-sellers, simply disappears, but with the threat of an irreversible and irreparable act which, if it becomes reality, will produce a new, and this time, I am convinced, final division among Christians, and will signify, at least for the Orthodox, the end of all dialogues. . . .

It is well known that the advocates of women's ordination explain the Scriptural and the traditional exclusion of women from ministry by cultural "conditioning." If Christ did not include women into the Twelve, if the Church for centuries did not include them into priesthood, it is because of "culture" which would have made it impossible and unthinkable then. It is not my purpose to discuss here the theological and exegetical implications of this view as well as its purely historical basis, which incidentally seems to me extremely weak and shaky; what is truly amazing is that while absolutely convinced that they understand past "cultures," the advocates of women's ordination seem to be totally unaware of their own cultural "conditioning," of their own surrender to "culture."

How else can one explain their readiness to accept what may prove to be a passing phenomenon and what, at any rate, is a phenomenon barely at its beginning (not to speak of the women's liberation movement, which at present is nothing but search and experimentation) as a sufficient justification for a radical change in the very structure of the Church? How else, furthermore, are we to explain that this movement is accepted on its own terms, within the perspective of "rights," "justice," "equality," etc.—all categories whose ability adequately to express

the Christian faith and to be applied as such within the Church is, to say the least, questionable?

The sad truth is that the very idea of women's ordination, as it is presented and discussed today, is the result of too many confusions and reductions. If its root is surrender to "culture," its pattern of development is shaped by a surrender to "clericalism." It is indeed almost entirely dominated by the old "clerical" view of the Church and the double "reduction" interest in it. The reduction on the one hand, of the Church to a "power structure," the reduction on the other hand, of that power structure to clergy. To the alleged "inferiority" of women within the secular power structure, corresponds their "inferiority," i.e., their exclusion from clergy, within the ecclesiastical power structure. To their "liberation" in the secular society must therefore correspond their "liberation," i.e., ordination, in the Church.

But the Church simply cannot be reduced to these categories. As long as we try to measure the ineffable mystery of her life by concepts and ideas *a priori* alien to her very essence, we entirely mutilate her, and her real power, her glory and beauty, and her transcendent truth simply escape us.

That is why in conclusion of this letter I can only *confess*, without explaining and justifying this confession by my "proofs." I can confess that the non-ordination of women to priesthood has nothing, *absolutely nothing*, to do with whatever "inferiority" we can invent or imagine. In the *essential reality* which alone constitutes the content of our faith and shapes the entire life of the Church, in the reality of the Kingdom of God which is perfect communion, perfect knowledge, perfect love and ultimately the "deification" of man, there is truly "neither male nor female." More than that, in this reality, of which we are made partakers *here and now*, we all, men and women, without any distinction, are "Kings and priests," for it is the essential *priesthood* of the human nature and vocation that Christ has restored to us.

It is of this *priestly life*, it is of this ultimate reality, that the Church is both gift and acceptance. And that she may be this, that she may always and everywhere be the gift of the Spirit without any measure or limitations, the Son of God offered himself in a unique sacrifice, and made this unique sacrifice and this unique priesthood the very foundation, indeed the very "form" of the Church. This priesthood is Christ's, *not* ours. None of us, man or woman, has any "right" to it; it is emphatically not one of human vocations, analogous, even if superior, to all others. The priest in the Church is not "another" priest, and the sacrifice he offers is not "another" sacrifice. It is forever and only Christ's priesthood and Christ's sacrifice—for, in the words of our Prayers of Offertory, "it is Thou who offerest and Thou who art offered, it is Thou who receivest and Thou who distributest . . ." And thus the "institutional" priest in the Church has no "ontology" of his own. It exists only to make Christ himself present, to make this unique Priesthood and this unique Sacrifice the source of the Church's life and the "acquisition" by men of the Holy Spirit. And if the bearer, the icon and

the fulfiller of that unique priesthood, is *man* and not woman, it is because Christ is *man* and not woman it is because Christ is man and *not* woman. . . .

Why? This of course is the *only* important, the only relevant question. The one precisely that no "culture," no "sociology," no "history," and even no "exegesis" can answer. For it can be answered only by *theology* in the primordial and essential meaning of that word in the Church; as the contemplation and vision of the Truth itself, as communion with the uncreated Divine Light. It is only here, in this purified and restored *vision* that we might begin to understand why the ineffable mystery of the relationship between God and His Creation, between God and His chosen people, between God and His Church, are "essentially" revealed to us as a nuptial mystery, as fulfillment of a mystical marriage. Why, in other terms, Creation itself, the Church herself, man and the world themselves, when contemplated in their ultimate truth and destiny, are revealed to us as Bride, as Woman clothed in sun; why in the very depth of her love and knowledge, of her joy and communion, the Church identifies herself with one Woman, whom she exalts as "more honorable than the Cherubim, and beyond compare more glorious than the Seraphim."

Is it this mystery that has to be "understood" by means of our broken and fallen world, which knows and experiences itself only in its brokenness and fragmentation, its tensions and dichotomies and which, as such, is incapable of the ultimate *vision*? Or is it this vision and this unique experience that must again become to us the "means" of our understanding of the world, the starting point and the very possibility of a truly Divine victory over all that in this world is but human, historical and cultural?

Alexander Schmemmann

# Some Remarks on Christian Priesthood and Women

By the REV. LOUIS C. BOUYER, *Cong. Orat.*

The Rev. Louis Bouyer was born in Paris and was for twelve years Professor of Church History and Spiritual Theology at the Institut Catholique in Paris. He is one of the thirty-five members of the Vatican's International Theological Commission.

Fr. Bouyer's lectures (also at Trinity Institute, New York), his personal influence, and his numerous published works have won him a wide audience in this country as well as in Europe—an audience which finds that each of his books opens up a new vista and depth in Christian thought and life.

His ordination to the ministry of the Lutheran Church before becoming a Roman Catholic has given him an acute perception into the springs of Protestantism.

Fr. Bouyer's books on spirituality, liturgy (as, e.g., *Liturgical Piety*), and church history are standard texts in the major seminaries in this country, and his prolonged study of the Renaissance period has made him an articulate spokesman of the tensions between Christians and the world.

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The possibility of conferring the Christian priesthood upon women has become, for many people, an essential item in what they call the "liberation of women." However, it can be seriously doubted whether this would contribute to the end for which it is introduced, while it seems clear that it would ruin not only the whole conception and reality of the Christian priesthood but some of the most basic elements of any Christianity worthy of the name.

For, to begin with, you cannot introduce a Christian priesthood of women without accepting, at least by implication, the idea that the founder of Christianity, Christ himself, could be wrong on a central point of his teaching in practice. It is useless to retort, as some try to do, that if Christ did not include women among his apostles, or more generally, those to whom he gave some part in the preaching of his gospel, like the seventy, it was just a matter of chance, or of a lack of opportunity. He did not call women, just as he did not call pagans, or blacks, or any other kind of foreigners—but, as these people say, the purely negative fact cannot permanently exclude women from the priesthood any more than it has excluded in the past converts from paganism, negroes, or other people introduced into the Church at a later stage. To such an argument, it is easy to answer that Our Lord had no actual

opportunity to call any of the people mentioned, just because he had no, or too few, opportunities (were it only to meet them), while he had just as many opportunities to meet women as he had to meet men. But even to say this, is to say too little. In fact Jesus, in open contradiction to the usual practice of the rabbis, and although he himself was not a married man as they were, did not hesitate to admit women into his closest company, into his discipleship. Therefore, if he did not call them either to the apostleship proper, or to any kind of apostolic ministry, it must have been as a matter, not of chance, nor of a lack of practical and actual opportunity, but of principle.

Against this fact, it cannot be said that he acted in such a way just to counteract a unanimous prejudice of the society of his times. First of all, no such prejudice ever existed then. Among the priesthoods of antiquity, in his own times, many were open to women as well as to men, and some of the most respected ones were a special privilege of women. It is true that it was a distinctive feature of Judaism, following the tradition of the early Hebrew religion, that women were not admitted any more among the rabbis than among the priests. But the explanation sometimes given that that could be accounted for only as a reaction against the nature-worship of the other Semitic people, which had led them to confer the priesthood upon women, who were in fact prostitutes, is self-destructive, for, in those shrines of the Babylonians or Canaanites, the "sacred" prostitution of men, as well as of women, was accepted as a part of their priesthood.

More generally speaking, in the Old Testament already, and in Judaism as well, the exclusion of women from the priesthood or the public teaching of doctrine, far from being linked with any diminished or impoverished idea of womanhood, went together with an esteem of women and a legal (and practical) situation for them in society which had no equivalent in antiquity, especially in the Greek-speaking world.

Against this, none of the objections often raised can stand, e.g. how many times has the *bereka* (prayer) daily said by Hebrew males been quoted: ". . . Blessed art thou, O Lord, to have made me a man and not a woman . . . ?" But it has been forgotten that the women were advised to say for their own part: "Blessed art thou . . . to have made me according to thy will . . ." (a sentence, let it be said, probably echoed in the answer of the B.V.M. to the Angel); but the rabbis explained that the men were taught to speak in that way to inculcate into them the idea that their responsibility for the divine worship was not to be interpreted so much as a burden (from which women were dispensed as a compensation for their family duties) but as an honor.

However, not even that certainly Jewish tendency to keep women inside the family circle could be given as the motive why Jesus did not call them to the Ministry of the Gospel. It seems that he made it clear that women, together with men, were henceforth not only to be freely admitted on a footing of perfect equality, together with men, as it was agreed among the rabbis already, to the whole lay participation in the service of the People of God, but that now they were to be made par-

takers of the full collective responsibility for its celebration. It is certainly under his personal influence that, from the very beginnings of the Christian Church, women were admitted to take part, exactly as men were, in the prayers of the faithful, in the offering of the gifts for the eucharist, and in the communion. They were equally admitted, very early, to a diaconal ministry, which seems to have been an exact equivalent of that of men-deacons, but they were never called, nor supposed to be able to be called, to the apostolic functions of exercising pastoral responsibility, together with publicly announcing the Word, and presiding at the eucharistic consecration. *This*, from the first, has been understood as an apostolic ordinance, backed by the practice and the undoubted intention of Christ Himself.

That it did not mean any aspersion on the possible equality of women with men concerning spiritual things, is made perfectly clear by two things. The first is the very high regard for the B.V.M. in Christian esteem, already manifest in Luke and John. It went so far indeed that, very early, it was understood that, in the Church, Mary had a position and a role not only as high as those of the Apostles, of the Twelve, and St. Paul, but much higher—although hers was not the same role as theirs.

The second evidence for the same point is in the position officially recognized in the ancient Church of the "Virgins" and the "Widows." It is not exaggerated to say that they were very early acknowledged as two "orders" of consecrated persons, having in the Church an official status, of which, or for which, there was no equivalent even for the male ascetics.

Here, maybe, we have the final cue to the distinctive vocations ascribed to men and to women in the Church from the beginning. The special *public* vocation of man in the apostolic ministry was seen as a vocation to represent, among all the members of Christ, the Head, which can be, just as the vocation of the Head itself, the vocation of men only. Exactly in the same way, the special *public* vocation of women was understood as a vocation to represent the Church as a body, as the Bride of Christ, in its consummate unity as well as in its eschatological integrity, which could be the vocation of women only, as it had been above all the vocation of Mary. Once again, no possible idea of inferiority could be connected with that specialization, since the B.V.M. was soon to be considered as higher, in the Church, than the Twelve and St. Paul.

Now, when we have reached this point, we come to a very remarkable agreement with something which has been brought into full light by the most recent researches both in psychology and sociology, concerning the "equality" of women with men. As the great Dutch scholar Buijtendijk has said very impressively in his book on *Woman*, it is only at an embryonic stage of modern "feminism" that it was naively supposed that, for women, to be accepted as equal to men had to mean doing all those things that men usually do. This, as he points out and demonstrates very conclusively, far from involving a true acknowledgement of the

positive and unique contribution of women to humanity, was a last attempt to subject them to purely masculine criteria and, therefore, a way of admitting them to full humanity only through depriving them of their femininity. The true, and the only true way, to an equality with men, which, for women, will not prove destructive of their own integrity, is not their admission to a kind of bogus masculinity, but the admission that, what as *women* they only can do and be. Their contribution to human existence is no less important or honorable than, although fundamentally different from, what the masculine contribution can be. If there is a field where this has to be understood and applied, it is certainly *par excellence* that of the Christian Ministry. Let us say it frankly: we are here again where we, theologians and canon lawyers, have found ourselves in so many other cases since the XVth Century. That is to say, when we intend to be "modern," "up to date," "with it," and so on, we usually just manage to consecrate and introduce into the very temple of the one true God the idols of yesterday, at the exact time when the children of the world, who are no fools, are seeing through them, exploding them and sweeping off the dust of their broken images. May we, once again, be saved from that sham "modernity" which will only succeed in making us the laughing stock of our more knowing contemporaries, while diluting into tepid and polluted waters the ever-fresh mainspring of Christianity. We are to transmit it from one generation to another, certainly adapted ever anew, although the same always; however, true adaptations have never been, and will never be, of a refashioned gospel of mere fancies, but only of the true gospel, the true reality of mankind.



# Is the Ordination of Women to the Pastoral Ministry Justifiable?

By THE REVEREND JEAN-JACQUES VON ALLMEN

This article by Jean-Jacques von Allmen was first published in *Verbum Caro* XVII (1963), No. 65—a publication of the Taizé Brothers in Taizé, France. The paper was first delivered to the Commission on Pastoral Ministry of the Reformed Church of France on February 4, 1963. The English translation was made by The Rev. Herbert Moore, Vicar of St. Stephen's, Gloucester Road, London.

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Professor von Allmen has written another essay on the same subject, *Women and the Threefold Ministry*, published in *Why Not? Priesthood and the Ministry of Women*, a theological study edited by Michael Bruce and G. E. Duffield, Marcham Manor Press, Appleford, Abingdon, Berkshire, Sutton Courteney 319 (1972). This essay may be regarded as supplementing the earlier one. Professor von Allmen says here that "basically, and in principle, I stand by what I wrote" in the earlier article. But he goes on to say: "Nevertheless, in view of subsequent literature, I need to temper some arguments and strengthen others".

The earlier article is reproduced because it comes to grips with a number of considerations that have been expressed in discussions on the diocesan level. It explains clearly why the concept of "justice and rights" is not relevant to ordination, why the text: "in Christ there is no longer either male or female." (Gal. 3:28), does not pertain to ministry but to baptism; why the N. T. Doctrine of Women is not a simple outline of the prejudices of the day, etc. etc.

The very important essay by Prof. J. J. von Allmen which follows is by far the longest contribution in this volume. The editor thinks it wise, therefore, to provide an outline of its contents for ease of reference.

## INTRODUCTION

### Definition of the Problem

#### PART I

Three major reasons why women should not be ordained to the pastoral ministry.

I—Ecclesiological: the error of the functional/professional view of the pastoral ministry.

A—An Argument against the proposition: "Women should be ordained because they have been to seminary and received the appropriate training."

B—Is the ministry of the *esse* or the *bene esse* of the Church?

C—From whence comes the Error?

1—The 'Enlightenment.'

2—A misinterpretation of the Priesthood of All Believers.

3—The Apostolic Succession in the Sacred Ministry according to the Reformed Faith.

II—Anthropological/eschatological considerations

A—In Christ, "there is no longer either male or female."

The meaning of Gal. 3:28 and parallels.

B—N.T. texts pertain to *Baptism* not *Ministry*.

C—Six reasons why these texts do not apply to the question of women pastors.

1—N.T. Doctrine of Woman is not a simple outline of the prejudices of the day.

2—N.T. Doctrine is based on Creation, not Fall.

3—Sexuality pertains to identity and deepest mystery of human being.

4—The connection between the Unity of Christ and Church and the unity of husband and wife.

5—Notes toward a Doctrine of Man.

6—The Pastoral Ministry as established in the N.T.

III—Ecumenical considerations in ordaining women pastors.

A—Far reaching theological consequences of allowing the ordination of women.

B—Who has ordained women?

C—Inhibition of relations between churches of the same confession and those of different confessions if women are ordained: the sin against love.

## PART II

Although this part is concerned with practical suggestions for the Reformed Church of France, there are many ways in which they are germane to the situation of the churches of the Anglican Communion.

I—The need for a rediscovered diaconal ministry.

A—Acknowledging God's call to women.

B—Showing that something is meant by talk about diversity of ministries.

C—Reforming the parochial structure.

D—Doing justice to the institution of deaconesses.

II—Diaconal ministry and women.

A—Pattern of community life with monastic vows.

B—Pattern of life without monastic vows.

1—Ministry within the parish (community life).

2—Part-time ministry.

3—Pastors' wives

C—Education and liturgical functions of deaconesses.

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The problem of the ordination of women not just to a ministry in the Church, but to the specifically pastoral ministry, is not only extremely difficult, the solution that is being proposed is also extremely disputed. In what follows, I should not wish to claim that I am discussing the problem in its entirety; that would need much more learning and much more time than I have at my disposal. It represents rather the first attempt at an answer, put forward in support of certain significant fundamental choices—choices which it would be necessary to examine, to justify, and to reformulate if one wished to do more than simply provide one element in the debate. In particular, I shall stop on the threshold of the mystery and the spiritual overtones of femininity and of masculinity—an investigation which would quite certainly have to be undertaken, in spite of the instinctive distrust which we protestants cheerfully display before these things, if one wished to be in any degree comprehensive. The contribution which follows is therefore very limited. (*Note:* It was delivered on 4 February 1963 to the "Commission of the Pastoral Ministry" of the Reformed Church of France.)

But in spite of its limitations, I want to lay stress on the fact that in the Church everything is grace. It would be a very wrong approach to the problem, if one approached it from the angle of rights which are claimed. No one, men no more than women, has the right to be a pastor. To be a pastor is always a grace, and if this grace bestows on someone to whom it is given certain rights, the sole purpose is in order that it may be able to act and radiate under suitable conditions. You condemn yourself to never solving the problem when you say that it is unjust that women have not, as men have, the right to be a pastor; it is a grace which has not been purposed for them, because it would divert

them from their being and their vocation, just as the grace of motherhood, for example, could not be given to a man.

The Gospel, however one views it, is not democratic, precisely because it is a grace and not a series of rights. If it is correct that a certain number of graces are offered to every human being who welcomes them as coming from God—the grace of faith and of baptism, the grace of the eucharistic life and of prayer, the grace of being able to forgive and to love—there are also specific graces which, while provided for the salvation of the world and the edification of the Church, are nevertheless given by God according to a pattern which depends upon his will, and not upon our whim. It is not the concern of the Church to seize hold of grace as a prize, and then to administer it according to inclination; the important thing is rather for the Church to understand that it can convey grace from every grace which is given to it, and that the grace which it conveys is not to be altered, it is the grace received it must convey. Now every ministry is a grace. It does not depend in the first place on the Church, but on the Lord of the Church; and if he has willed that among the ministries that of the pastor is to be reserved for men, the Church consequently does not have the right to oppose this will by disobeying.

It seems to me indeed important to emphasize and to underline the fact that the question which we are concerned with is not one of the many questions which in the 16th century were classified among “ceremonies” and which today could more easily be assigned to the level of the *bene esse* of the Church. If it is necessary to recall that the pastoral ministry does not arise from the category of human rights, if—like all ministry—it is a grace, it is consequently necessary to recall that the obedience of the Church is in hazard when it is seeking to find out how to receive, to recognize this grace and how to integrate it into its life. The hazard here is the faithfulness of the Church and thus the authentic ecclesial nature of the Church. It could not be a question of progressive adaptation or reactionary obstinacy, for we are not called upon to comply with the present age, either in respect of what impels it forward or what restrains it; it is simply a question of obedience or disobedience, of faithfulness or unfaithfulness. This obedience or this disobedience can certainly be displayed to a varying extent; it is possible to disobey with sufficient discretion to avoid a head-on collision with certain biblical affirmations which it is impossible to dispose of entirely; it is also possible to obey in a fashion which makes this obedience suspicious because it is supported by the help of arguments which, in order not to belong to our own age, feel much more like previous ages than the coming age. I hope here to offer to the Church not a slothful or reactionary obedience, but on the contrary an obedience that is demanding, imaginative and shaped by the hope of the resurrection.

In what follows, we shall examine first the reasons why it is not justifiable to ordain women to the pastoral ministry; then we shall try to see how the Church could receive, recognize, and integrate into its

life the unquestionable vocations which the Lord of the Church places before all Christians.

In order to avoid all confusion, it is important to begin by defining what is meant, in the following article, by the *pastoral* ministry: "The pastoral ministry is that grace, which the Lord has willed for the Church and instituted in the Church, by which one of the faithful, following on the apostles, is called to act in the name of Christ the prophet, Christ the priest (*sacrificateur*), and Christ the king. From this fact, following on the apostles and thus in the name of Christ, the pastor is minister of the Word, of the sacraments and of the discipline. It is by the power of the Holy Spirit, invoked upon him at his ordination, that he is justified in exercising this ministry in the Church, and that he presumes to "exercise it with confidence." This definition does not enter into the distinctions, or the complexity, or the details of organization, in the pastoral ministry. Nevertheless it seems to me to be sufficient because it reunites, I believe, the definition which our Fathers of the Reformation gave of the pastor and that identical one which our Fathers of the early Church gave of the bishop. I take as my starting point the profound conviction that this definition corresponds to that which the New Testament teaches us as applying to the successors of the apostles.

There are three major reasons why it does not seem to me to be justifiable to ordain women to the pastoral ministry; the first is ecclesiological, the second is both anthropological and eschatological, the third is ecumenical.

### (I)

One of the first reasons why it is often desired to admit women to the pastoral ministry, is that women are allowed to pursue studies which normally form a preparation for this ministry; since women are accepted in the faculties of theology, and according to the regulations they follow there the same course, offer the same work, and pass the same examination as men, they must, it is said, be given the chance to practice the profession which they have been allowed to learn.

Without pausing here at the genuine problem which this reasoning offers, it does seem to me to arise from a fundamental ecclesiological error. This reasoning, in fact, is put forward in support of the idea that the pastoral ministry is not so much an institution of the Lord as an internal measure of ecclesiastical efficiency. The starting point is the conviction that the Church, as such, has been entrusted by God with a certain number of tasks and that, in order to fulfill them best, it trains "technicians," whom it enlists according to its needs and their abilities. The ministers then are kinds of ecclesiastical officials—ministers of the Church rather than ministers of Christ in the Church—responsible for doing what would be in short the task of the whole body of the faithful, but which cannot be demanded of them all, because it is not possible to disturb them all from their commitments involving family life or social, economic, political, or cultural activities. In order to make up for this impossibility—with this touch of bad conscience which takes shape as

a hidden anti-clericalism—the Church then trains, enlists, and supports “theologians,” who are a kind of full-time laity. Since the ministry, according to this view, arises from things not of the *essence* but of the *well-being* of the Church, the latter regards herself in fact as mistress, as manager, as founder or inventor of her own structure and of the ministries which are exercised in her midst or in her name in the world. In the last resort, she could even dispense with them, for it is not her existence and her life, but rather her efficiency which would be affected by this deficiency. Now if the ministry is in fact only one of the constituents of the Church’s *bene esse*, and not one of the necessary conditions of her *esse*, why should not the well-being of the Church involve giving to technically qualified women (that is, licentiates in theology) access to the pastoral ministry? And why should not this well-being involve such an access, especially at a time when, after sociological upheavals, women have won access to most of the occupations from which they were debarred under the influence of a different sociological climate of opinion?

It will be said that I am distorting the picture and it is true; I have hardly ever found in our tradition such an obvious way of setting out the problem. I am continually astonished to find it is *this* doctrine of the pastoral ministry which Roman Catholics, even the most fairminded ones, such as P. Le Guillou, Professor H. Küng, and others, attribute to us, and that our protests against such a fundamental misunderstanding are amazingly weak, so weak that one can really ask oneself if there is a misunderstanding, and if it is not, in fact, thus that we formulate and implicitly solve the problem of the pastoral ministry. Now if the problem of the pastoral ministry is accurately stated in these terms, if it is an internal measure of efficiency, if it proclaims in brief a rationalization of the well-known universal priesthood, if it derives only from the *bene esse* of the Church, if it is not constitutive of the Church, that is to say if the way in which it is solved does not constantly involve, in the last resort, faithfulness or heresy, then there is no reason for debarring women from the pastoral ministry. One must be bold enough to say this point-blank. But in that case I hope we shall have the courtesy not to be niggardly; that we shall not condemn them, for instance, to a situation in which they can only be ordained to the pastoral ministry on condition that they accept the fact that they are to exercise it merely as a subordinate, as an assistant, and not as the incumbent of the parish. (Note: As if the power of jurisdiction outweighed theologically the power of orders.) And I hope, even, that we shall have the courage to carry the matter to its conclusion; that we shall give up ordaining pastors. For in this theological context, it is difficult to see what significance there can be any longer in ordaining men or women to the pastoral ministry. In fact, if the pastoral ministry is only a full-time occupation for specialized lay people, ordination, in the way that we traditionally practice it, is nonsense, indeed it is a contradiction and an error. For if the pastoral ministry is only that, baptism is sufficient for the valid exercise of it.

But whence have we derived an ecclesiology which breaks down at this point, the pastoral ministry? In order to reply to this question, we must conduct a search in the three following directions:

First of all, the weakening of the doctrine of the pastoral ministry, which makes of it a means of ecclesiastical efficiency, which places it only on the level of the *bene esse* of the Church, seems to me to arise from the contamination of the Enlightenment (*Aufklärung*). In opposition to the Gospel, which is—if I may so put it—an undertaking of sanctification, the Enlightenment is an undertaking of secularisation (*profanation*). The grace of baptism encourages the diversity and the specific character of vocations and of “aphorisms” (that is, parts to be played), and it delights in them, for it is aware that their purpose is unity, edification, radiance, the life of the Body of Christ; rationalist enlightenment (*illuminiſme*) fears them because it sees there sources of difference and thus causes of jealousy, of envy, of tyranny; because it finds proof there of a refusal to conform, to come into line, a persistent trace of this “sacredness,” from which it has sworn to set men free. With complete disregard for the biblical doctrine of baptism, people go on affirming that from now on there is no longer any difference between the sacred and the profane; and under the shelter of this proposition, they attempt to exclude from the Church anyone who would recall this difference, and thus also the difference between the clergy and the laity.

(Theologically, this difference has nothing to do with the difference between the sacred and the profane, because it concerns a distinction within the sacred; but historically it can appear to give rise to this difference, since the Enlightenment is a cultural movement manifesting itself in western Christendom which had only too great an inclination to “make sacred” the clergy and secularize the laity.) It is a “desecration,” a secularization of the pastoral ministry to cease receiving it as a grace—except at the time of sermons delivered at parochial inductions—to reduce it to an occupation in the internal organization. It is relevant to this that in certain Reformed Churches, particularly influenced by the Enlightenment, the pastor does not even have a consultative place on the parish council. What is more disturbing is the attempt to have this secularization regarded as Christian obedience, when it is obeying influences far removed from the faith . . . if only they would at least admit that the norm of the faith is not History, but the Gospel!

The weakening of the doctrine of the pastoral ministry, about which we are speaking, seems to me to have two other causes as well. One dates back to the Reformation, the other is quite recent, at least in its expression. The first arises from a wrong interpretation of the royal priesthood (*sacriſicature*) of the people of God, about which the book of Exodus speaks and which is mentioned in the first Epistle of Peter and in the Apocalypse. Since the Middle Ages erected a general barrier to conceiving of the pastoral ministry in any other category than the sacerdotal category, it was thought that, because all the baptized play their part in a people consisting of priests (*sacriſicateurs*) and thus—it

was inferred—each single one is a priest, the Church can dispense with specific and professional “priests” (*pretres*). For her successful advance, she will employ instead ministers who will be less ministers of the Lord than her ministers to herself. Looking at the matter objectively, I believe that it is possible to say that this idea is to be found more often in the thought of Luther than in that of the Reformed Church, or at least that on its first appearance it was not so strongly refuted among the Lutherans as among us Reformed. It only stops short of that conception, according to which every particular ministry in the Church is no more than an emanation, by proxy, of the “universal priesthood” and, because it has properly speaking no specific ecclesiological character, has been implanted in us swiftly and has taken lasting roots; and the very true and wise warning of the later Swiss Confession has been forgotten: “These are . . . matters greatly varying and dissimilar, the priesthood and the ministry.” In fact, if the pastoral ministry (and all other ministry besides) is no more than a regulated expression of the universal priesthood, how could it be an institution devised, willed, deliberately planned by Jesus Christ, for whom the Church exists and lives; how could it fail to be simply a highly respectable and valid element in the mere *bene esse* of the Church? Here, I think we should have some serious questions to put also to a number of Roman theologians who appear to be taking a Lutheran approach (more especially as the “universal priesthood” is not a doctrine which provides the solution of the problem of ministries *within* the Church, but a profitable approach to the problem of the ministry *of* the Church in the world).

The final cause of the weakening of the doctrine of the pastoral ministry, which condemns it to being no more than one of the component parts of the *bene esse* of the Church, seems to me much more recent, at least in its formulation. It is the consequence of exaggerating a tendency common enough among us, which could be described in the following way: there is one single ministry essential to the Church, one single ministry instituted by the Lord, one single ministry which is a matter of life or death to the Church, that is the apostolic ministry; now this ministry is unique and unrepeatable, or—if you prefer, this ministry from that time onwards can no longer be exercised by members of the Church, because it is exercised by the testimony of the apostles, that is to say, by the New Testament. Thus, since there are no longer any apostles, there is no longer an essential ministry, or, if you prefer: The Church acknowledges the essential ministry, she pays reverence to the ministry instituted by Christ, when she receives the canon of the New Testament. In other respects, she can organize herself as seems good.

The problems which are presented here are too large to be merely skated over. Let us notice just this: I do not see, either in the New Testament, or among those who were the first to read it (the Fathers of the primitive Church), or among those who rediscovered it (the Reformers), the theory which would reduce the apostolic succession to the canonization of apostolic writings; neither in the New Testament,



nor in the Fathers, nor in the Reformers, do I find the assertion that the post-apostolic ministries, the ministries of the apostolic succession, do not belong to the Lord's institution, but to human invention; neither in the New Testament, nor in the early Fathers, nor even in the Reformers, do I find the idea of a fundamental change in the Church just exactly at the death of the apostles, as if what came afterwards had no longer any actual relevance, had no longer any continuity, any genuine history, as if the Church did not have to continue, to last, without interruption, until the Parousia; as if the pastoral ministry, the ministry in the apostolic succession, willed and instituted by Christ, was not precisely one of the graces by which he accompanies his people from one generation to another until his return. I do not know to what extent the doctrine of the apostolic succession can be and has been distorted. But I make the point that it would be utterly wrong to take a pride in the Reformation on the grounds that it rejected the apostolic succession—and an apostolic succession not simply in the kerygma, but in the exercise of the pastoral ministry. For the Reformation did not wish to break away from the apostolic succession, but on the contrary to restore it as part of the reform of the Church. (Note: I hope soon to supply the evidence of this in a book entitled *The Sacred Ministry According to the Reformed Faith.*)

## (II)

Now I believe that only by means of rejecting a doctrine of the apostolic succession in the ministry also, a doctrine which must moreover be specified, is it possible to uproot the ministry of the Word, of the sacraments and of the discipline from the *esse* of the Church, in order to place this ministry on the level of the *bene esse* and thus to surrender it to the mercy of what in the 16th century was condemned under the term "human inventions." And it is perhaps in this that the question of the ordination of women to the pastoral ministry is a most beneficial question: it will compel us to take up a position on the doctrine which among all of them makes us most uncomfortable, the doctrine of apostolic succession. Provided then that we can strengthen our resolution sufficiently to dare to take the path which Calvin shows us rather than the one which Carlstadt offers.

But, it will be said, does the ordination of women to the pastoral ministry really involve this disqualification of the specific character of the ministry, does it really degrade this ministry to a mere occupation for efficient working? Can one not maintain in all its truth the doctrine, at once biblical, catholic, and reformed, of the pastoral ministry when at the same time ordaining women to it, since henceforth in Christ, "there is neither male nor female"? We come thus to the second reason—a reason both anthropological and eschatological—why I believe it is not justifiable to ordain women to the pastoral ministry. It requires a number of distinctions and definitions.

In order to justify the ordination of women to the pastoral ministry, a starting point is willingly made at the assertion of S. Paul, in his letter

to the Galatians, that now "there is no longer here either Jew or Greek; there is no longer either slave or free; there is no longer either male or female; for you are all one in Jesus Christ (3.28)". Before following this further, let us notice that this text has three parallels in the Epistles of St. Paul: in Romans 10,12 the apostle observes that since all are saved who call on the name of the Lord, who confess with their mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in their heart that God has raised him from the dead, "there is no difference, no *diastole*, at all between Jew and Greek"; and in 1 Cor. 12,13 he recalls that "we have all been baptized by one Spirit into one body, whether Jews, or Greeks, whether bond, or free, we have all been made to drink into one Spirit"; finally, in Col. 3,11 where St. Paul is describing the behavior proper to those who, being baptized, are risen with Christ, he declares to his readers that, since they have put off the old man as outgrown, and have put on the new man, who does not cease to be renewed—in the light of perfect knowledge—after the image of him who created him, they must know that "there is no longer here either Jew or Greek, either circumcised or uncircumcised, either barbarian or Scythian, either bond or free, but Christ who is all in all." Only the first of these four parallel texts includes, in its list, *arsen kai thelu*, male and female. (Note: This phrase also occurs in certain manuscripts of Col. 3,11.)

It will be observed that these texts are connected with baptism rather than with the pastoral ministry; from the fact that baptism is sufficient for salvation, from the fact that it does not need to be completed or confirmed by circumcision, women are not passed over in what relates to salvation, they receive the benefit of the same grace as men. Does this however mean that, if all those—whatever their race, their social position, their sex (Note: Even an eunuch can be baptized, Acts 8,38)—who confess the lordship and the resurrection of Christ and who are baptized, can be received into the Church, it then follows that in the Church the differences between men, and particularly this chief difference, going back before the Fall (*supralapsaire*), between men and women, are to be repudiated? Can one then take advantage of the text in Gal. 3,28 for justifying the legitimacy of ordaining women to the pastoral ministry? I think not for the following six reasons.

The first thing to remember is that it is a strange piece of self-deception to see in the New Testament Doctrine of Women (*gynecologie*) a simple outline of opinions and prejudices of that time. The doctrine of women has, on the contrary, a share in that *metanoia*, the reversal of outlook, which the Christian Faith demands. To recover a term which we protestants make undoubtedly generous use of, but which is no exaggeration in this case, the New Testament is revolutionary in the way in which it speaks of women. To the scandalized surprise of his contemporaries Jesus is seen speaking to women—to the Samaritan women or to Mary who chose that good part; he is heard asserting—an astonishing thing at that time—that a man can be an adulterer not only with regard to another man whose wife or betrothed he seduced, but in respect of his own wife; the Church is seen giving to women also, and

specifically (Acts 8.12, et al.), full admission to the People of God, receiving them by a baptism which is sufficient, which has no need of any completion which favours men, such as circumcision; and it is S. Paul, accused of having such a great contempt for women, who led almost single-handedly the struggle which made not only Greeks the equal of Jews, but also women the equal of men.

Women such as Priscilla, or the sisters and mothers mentioned at the end of the epistle to the Romans, are seen "labouring much for the Lord" and thus playing a part in the Church which made it impossible to regard them as minor beings; the assertion to the Galatians is heard (already quoted), according to which not only racial and social barriers, but also sexual ones, cease in Christ to be insurmountable in peace, cease to be the causes of division; S. Paul is caught improving on the sacred text so as to be able to include women in it; in a reference to 2 Sam. 7,14—"I will be his father and he shall be my son" he changes it into the plural, in order to say, "And I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters" (2 Cor. 6,18).

One could multiply examples of this freedom which the Gospel brings to women, freedom not only from the bonds of Satan, but freedom also in consequence from the bonds of custom, to the extent that in Corinth, for example, certain women believed that they could take advantage of this freedom in order to free themselves from their marriage. S. Paul sees the error in this and fights against it; but it too often is forgotten that this error could not have arisen at Corinth if the Gospel had not fundamentally transformed the condition of women. And we should do well to ask ourselves if the supposedly anti-feminist assertions, with which the apostle is so bitterly reproached, were not intended to calm down a dangerous exaltation, incited by a false interpretation of the renewal afforded by salvation, much more than to prove how much S. Paul was subject to the prejudices of his education. In short, it is erroneous to say that the authors of the New Testament were incapable of conceiving of the ordination of women to the ministry of the Word, the Sacraments and the discipline, simply because they shared the prejudices of an age which would not have tolerated it. The Gospel has no hesitation, in the case of other points just as sensitive—divorce and adultery, for example—in upsetting the prejudices of the age, and to do so with a courage, a unanimity, and an effect which confounds those who, on these same points, do not dare today to stem the flood of prejudices so similar to those of that time. This shows us that we must be very careful when we accuse the authors of the New Testament of not daring to carry the Gospel to its conclusion because it would overthrow too many things.

But if the New Testament lays stress on the entire and complete renewal which the Gospel brings to women no less than to men, this renewal does not invent, it restores; as with Christian marriage, it recovers and revives what was "in the beginning." The Doctrine of Woman, in the New Testament in general, and in S. Paul in particular, is not based on the account of the Fall, but on that of Creation. "Man

has not emanated from woman, but woman from man; and man has not been created for woman, but woman for man" (1 Cor. 11, 8). The Gospel, in other words, does not save *from Creation*, it saves *Creation*; it does not rescue *from* the world willed by God, it rescues *the world* willed by God. Redemption does not contradict Creation, it vindicates it. It would require therefore falling into the heresy of Marcion and of Montanus to deny that it is the Redeemer (who is also the Creator) who has willed that there is to be a difference between men and women, and that this difference is to continue—further it must be a matter of surprise to find precisely among the Marcionites and Montanists the first evidence of the ordination of women to the administration of the mysteries of God.

In his first letter to Timothy, S. Paul does not hesitate to ascribe to the Devil the refusal to honour and reverence the work of the Creator, and the inability to give Him thanks for it. This is also what emerges from the seventh chapter of the first letter to the Corinthians; to the women who are Marcionites by anticipation and who disturb the Church by their refusal to accept their femininity as grace, the apostle retorts that they deceive themselves. The Gospel saves them as much as it saves men, but it saves them both not *from* their masculinity or their femininity, but *in* their masculinity or their femininity. Salvation gives them, both of them, their true situation, and if they do not want this situation, they do not want salvation. The fact that the modern world has lost the meaning and the dimensions of biblical anthropology by losing its faith in God the Creator is no reason for supposing that this decadence justifies an attitude of acquiescence.

For—and this is the third reason why biblical anthropology and eschatology do not appear to me to justify the ordination of women to the pastoral ministry—we must remember that the polarisation, whether masculine or feminine, of human beings is not an accident, but affects them in their very identity and in their deepest mystery. When it is forgotten, man becomes an abstraction. It is the reason why sexual sins involve the man who commits them right to the very depth of himself. S. Paul, in the sixth chapter of his first letter to the Corinthians, makes a sharp distinction between the sins committed outside the body, that is to say outside the depth of his being, and those committed against his body, that is to say (as the context shows) against what is destined for resurrection, against what is "for the Lord." Now these sins "against his own body" are sexual sins. We could see another proof of this sexual character of the identity of human beings in those cases of angelic marriage, of pure marriage which modern interpretation seems increasingly disposed to allow in reading 1 Cor. 7,36 *et seq.* These marriages, which the apostle tolerates, are not marriages of homosexuals (which would have to be a conceivable possibility in the Church, if the fact that in Christ there is no longer either man or woman really meant what people sometimes want it to mean), but unions between a man and his "virgin" foreshadowing the Kingdom. We have there one of the pieces of biblical evidence—to which could be added 1 Cor. 6, 13-14 or

1 Peter 3,7, which specifies that women are to inherit with men the grace of life—on which so many of the Fathers base their argument in order to teach that in the Resurrection world there will be men and women, even if they no longer marry (moreover, Jesus is raised up as *aner* and not as *anthropos*, 2 Cor. 11, 2).

It is therefore not in spite of, or without reference to their masculinity or their femininity that people are called to serve the Lord, but by consenting to this masculinity or this femininity, even if they must consent to it by means of celibacy, which is also a way of being a man or being a woman which grace can reach and transform. Procreation alone is, in fact, far from being a sufficient justification for the difference of the sexes; that is why we have good biblical support for declining to make procreation the primary and essential justification for marriage. This allows us to take a step forward.

For S. Paul, who in this connection undoubtedly sounds the deepest note which is found on this subject in the New Testament, the difference of the sexes reaches its fullness in the fact that it allows men and women to explain the "great mystery" of salvation. Indeed, the way in which he reasons in Ephesians 5 is much too basically theological, much too faithful also to one of the recurring themes of biblical revelation, to allow us to think that it is accidentally, or unintentionally, or involuntarily, that he interprets marriage as it is restored in the Church with the nuptial union between Christ and the Church without falsifying and upsetting salvation. The difference between Christ and the Church is not accidental and temporary, it is essential and eternal, in spite of their unity, or rather precisely because of their unity, and to make it possible. If the difference of the sexes did not assign to men and women their place at the deepest level of their existence, and in such a way as to prevent their becoming interchangeable, the Pauline argument of the "great mystery"—by now this phrase is full of meaning!—would be artificial and shallow, and certainly no serious commentator would support it.

Four arguments have now been advanced in order to refute the idea that in Christ the difference between man and woman is abolished, an idea sometimes advanced in support of justifying the possibility of an ordination of women to that essentially Christ-like ministry known as the pastorate; the really innovatory character of the Doctrine of Woman in the New Testament, the origin of sexual differentiation to be placed before the Fall (with the consequence that it is not possible to repent of being a man or of being a woman, but only of the way in which one is this), the determining character of this differentiation, and the "great mystery" which becomes possible by virtue of this differentiation.

These four arguments can be put forward with very little risk. The one which I now embark on and which with some hesitation I will call "the mediatorial character of the man" doubly requires to be put forward with prudence; first because we are dealing with something which is a matter of experience rather than proof, secondly because what is suggested here has occasioned odious male pretensions and arrogance,

so true is it that men—and women besides—find it tremendously difficult not to regard as a right what has been a gift. (*Note: If the Christian Doctrine of Woman finds its meaning in the Church, the Christian Doctrine of Man finds its meaning in Christ.*)

When it has lost its bearings, the Doctrine of Man at once becomes self-righteous and hateful. But this self-righteousness is not an unavoidable accompaniment of all specific Doctrine of Man; it becomes so in a Doctrine of Man which strays away from its Christ-like meaning. For its cure and forgiveness, it is not necessary to prevent its being a specific Doctrine of Man (*andrologic*) by making it into a generalized anthropology; but it must be re-oriented. The same can be said about the Christian Doctrine of Woman, threatened quite as much by self-righteousness. What is a woman when she is no longer the image of the Church? It is a matter of knowing what S. Paul meant when he wrote to the Corinthians: "I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is man; and the head of Christ is God" (1 Cor. 11,3).

It seems to me to be impossible to dispute the fact that there is in this text a gradation (*etagement*); God reaches men by Christ, and Christ reaches women by men. Which undoubtedly implies the converse also; just as men reach God by Christ, so women reach Christ by men. But even if that required going beyond the thought of the apostle, there would remain at least the fact of the "heads": God, Christ, man. Woman is not a "head." Now this gradation—which, as the apostle is anxious to state in verses 11 and 12, is not intended to upset or belittle women—is placed in a context of mediation; Christ stands between God and man; there is his place and his function. In the same way, man stands between Christ and woman; there, also, is his place and function, and it is in support of the point which the apostle is making; since with the help of this argument he justifies the liturgical attitude which women are to adopt. . . . In my opinion, it is no departure from this Pauline framework to say therefore that the work of God is transmitted through the mediation of Christ and, now that Christ has ascended into glory, through the derived and ministerial mediation of those whom he has charged to dispense the mysteries of God. Stated without safeguards and without qualifications, this means that between the Ascension and the Parousia, the mediator of grace among men is man, rather than woman. It is he who extends grace, since woman gives back grace. Expressing it in the terminology of Melancthon, one can say that, in the couple, man represents the sacramental element, whereas woman represents the sacrificial element. But the *sacramental* element (he extends grace) is not more than the *sacrificial* element (she gives back grace), since these two elements are both indispensable for the work of salvation to be achieved; since these two elements are an expression of the unique work of the Spirit who gives Christ *to us* (by means of grace; sacramental element) and who gives us *to Christ* (by bringing to birth in us faith, hope and love; sacrificial element); since

a Spirit whose only work was to give Christ to us or to give us to Christ would not be the Holy Spirit.

It is to be particularly noticed that if the pastoral ministry sets her free from the mediation of grace, if it is of a sacramental, and *not* a sacrificial character, if the regular exercise of it is consequently proper to man and not to woman, this does not in any way disqualify woman, but assigns to her her specific place. Just as the Church is not disqualified from being the Church rather than Christ, so woman is not disqualified from being the symbol of the *action* of grace, rather than the *means* of grace, since the means of grace miscarry if grace is not given back, and grace can only be given back if grace has been received. I do not think, however, that what we are unskillfully attempting to unravel here prevents Christian woman from also becoming the *mediatrix* of grace. But it means that if woman assumes this place, it is either when God temporarily dispenses with man (as in the virginal conception of Jesus), or else when man withdraws from his function of principal mediator of grace, as in the case of mixed marriages in which the husband is an unbeliever and the wife consequently becomes the justifying and sanctifying element (see 1 Cor. 7, 14-16).

Now the ministry of the Word, of the sacraments, and if discipline is a mediatorial function, one of the means which the Lord instituted to the end that the salvation achieved *illic et tunc* by Christ may be experienced *hic et nunc* by the Christian. To wish to entrust their administration to men or to women or to women indiscriminately is to overthrow the order and intention of creation. Woman could only accept and assume this place in the absence of any man or if men withdrew; then perhaps and very exceptionally, it could be temporarily a course made tolerable by necessity. But so long as there are men in the Church, it would mean inflicting upon women a *usurpation*, and on men a *deprivation*, by compelling women to forswear themselves in order to become ministers of the Word, the sacraments and discipline. For, even if they are holders of a License in Theology, what is a License in Theology in comparison with God's Creation?

The last argument to show that the reconciliation in Christ of men and women does not mean that their masculinity or their femininity have become theologically a matter of indifference or, as it were, an accident, recalls us to facts more directly accessible and verifiable; the New Testament, in spite of the chance of total renewal which it provides for women as well as for men, never testifies that a woman could be, in a public and authorized way, representative of Christ. To no woman does Jesus say, "He who hears you, hears me." To no woman does he make the promise to ratify in heaven what she has bound or loosed on earth. To no woman does he entrust the ministry of public preaching. To no woman does he give the command to baptize or to preside at the communion of his Body and Blood. To no woman does he commit his flock. Now there were numerous women who could have, for example, perfectly fulfilled the conditions set out at the beginning of the book of Acts when it was a question of finding a successor to the

traitor Judas. When reading these conditions, one thinks instinctively at first of the women who had followed Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem, who had been present at his death and his burial, and to whom, even before the appearance to the Apostles, the Risen Lord had shown himself alive. We even know their names: Mary Magdalene, Joanne the wife of Chuza, Suzanna, the other Mary. . . . There was also the mother of the Saviour, who had once already given him to the world, and who consequently appeared appropriate, more than anyone else, to undertake the task afresh of bringing him to the world. Nevertheless, not one of these women is even brought forward as a candidate to succeed Judas, but some of the men entirely unknown until then: Matthias and Joseph Barsabas. This does not at all imply that in the view of the New Testament Christian women are to be debarred from witness and from prayer, even in public. But since no one could spread the Gospel, administer the sacraments, and govern the Church, without being appointed for that by Christ and authorized by him, and since such offices have never been entrusted by Jesus to women, the Church will not entrust them to women. This is certainly not out of disdain, or because of masculine obstinacy, but through obedience. In this connection, what happened on Easter morning is highly symptomatic and in my opinion normative for the course of sacred history. It was to women that Jesus appeared first in the record of Matthew, Mark, and John; they were women who were the first witnesses of the empty tomb, in the record of Luke. This is fresh proof of the importance which women acquired with the Gospel, and by it. But to these first witnesses of his victory, to these first witnesses of what is the heart and essence of the Gospel, Jesus does not say: Go and proclaim it to the world. He gives them the command to go and tell it to the Eleven. If Jesus had wished to invest them in the Church with the apostolic ministry of the Word, the sacraments and discipline, he would have charged them to go and proclaim to the world what they had seen and heard.

### (III)

It remains for me to outline a final reason why the ordination of women to the pastoral ministry does not seem to me to be justifiable. This reason would not be sufficient in itself and it could not be substituted for the first two. In contrast to those, it depends less on faith than on hope and love; it is the ecumenical reason.

We know that outside the heretical groups—the Marcionites and Montanists who, really, because of their *heretical* notions, ordained women for the public administration of the means of grace, this kind of ordination has not had a following in the tradition of the Church. We have to wait until the nineteenth century to see this practice spreading among certain protestant groups who were themselves particularly open to the ecclesiological error of which I spoke at the beginning, the error according to which the ministry is scarcely more than a measure of *Bene esse* in the Church. But we know also that this kind of ordination is for the majority of the Churches who take their stand



on faithfulness to the Gospel and to the primitive Church a stumbling-block and a reason for Christian division. Scandalous in the etymological sense of that word, this kind of ordination is not so because all the Churches have not yet reached the stage of enlightenment sufficient for them to throw overboard old-fashioned traditions and prejudices, but rather because the Churches scandalized by such a measure understand—with the support of arguments similar or parallel to those I have put forward—that by adopting the practice of ordaining women to the pastoral ministry, they would be doing much more than taking an internal administrative decision; they would be taking a fundamental and theological decision, which could not but have repercussions at once on the doctrine of the Church and the Ministry, and on anthropology.

I do not propose to make a list of the Confessions which accept and those which reject the ordination of women to the pastoral ministry at the present time. (Note: For a recent comprehensive survey, see K. Bliss: *The service and status of women in the churches*, London 1954, pp. 132-161.) But I would make the point that apart from the Confessions which took advantage of the fragmentation of the Western Church in the sixteenth century to organize themselves in separation and which were attacked by the Reformers (the Mennonites, for example), and apart from the Confessions which have arisen since the Reformation by schism from certain Reformed Churches (in particular certain English non-conformist Churches and their offshoots and further offshoots in America), the ordination of women to the ministry of the Word, the sacraments, and discipline has been either avoided without consideration of the subject (Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches), or has been rejected in spite of some protests (Church of England) (Note: Cf. e.g., R. W. Howard: *Should women be priests?* Oxford 1949; M. E. Thrall: *The ordination of women to the priesthood*, London, 1958), or has been rejected by a strong majority but permitted in some exceptional instances (Reformed Church), or finally has been permitted more generally in spite of violent internal protests (Lutheranism). On this subject, it is to be noticed in this outline that in the latter two groups permission is most widespread where the Church is in practice dependent upon the State, and where consequently the juridical and disciplinary autonomy of the Church can only be expressed with some difficulty, when it can indeed still be expressed (German Switzerland for the Reformed Church, Scandinavia and Germany for Lutheranism). There is the further point—if my information is correct—that it is only in Alsace, that is, where Ministers of Religion (*Ministres du culte*) are in the service of the State, that the ordination of women to the pastoral ministry constitutes the least problem in France.

It would be possible to deduce some very interesting lessons from this slight survey. But I forego that, in order to state in simple terms the two following questions:

Is it wise, in this period when all the ecclesiological problems are

in motion, to take a doctrinal and disciplinary decision which we know will be disputed as much by Churches of the same Confessions as by Churches of other Confessions? Must we not, on the contrary, unless forced to a decision by an over-riding necessity, postpone such a doctrinal and disciplinary decision *because it would be sinning against love*, because it would be taking no account of the presence, the advice, and the anxieties of those who, in other Churches of the same Confession and of other Confessions, are our brothers in Jesus Christ? That is my first question.

The second is this: Is it wise, in this period when all the ecclesiological problems are in motion, to take a doctrinal and disciplinary decision which we know would poison the wound from which Western Christianity is suffering so much: the frightening simplification of simply dividing the Church into two parts, Catholicism (which then ends up by being no more than Roman) and Protestantism (which then ends up by being no more than modernist)? Must we not to the contrary, unless forced to a decision by an over-riding necessity, postpone such a doctrinal and disciplinary decision *because it would be sinning against the hope* of one day seeing Catholicism and Protestantism reconciled? This question seems to be even more necessary when we recall the subject of debate which reaches to the very heart of the difficulties encountered in the search for unity: the problem of the ministry. Would it not serve to endanger in advance the few chances which remain of resolving it, if we were to load it by deciding that we should straightway ordain women to the ministry of the Word, the sacraments, and discipline?

It is not my concern to give an answer to these questions. But if I may be allowed a word of advice, it is this: even if you were not persuaded that the doctrinal reasons put forward earlier are sufficient for refusing to ordain women to the pastoral ministry, it would still be necessary, in the present ecclesiological context, to refuse it, to avoid complicating further the ecumenical problem presented by the ministry. I think that a Church which refused to allow itself to be influenced by this argument would be lacking in love and in hope, and, (under the safe pretext of obedience), would be making a display of *pride, of insensitiveness, and even of sectarian spirit*.

On two occasions, just now, I said: "unless forced to a decision by an over-riding necessity." Now is there not an over-riding necessity? Does not the pastoral shortage suggest to the Churches that they should make up the number of their pastoral clergy with women? Do not the vocations which God directs to women, who are both suitable and capable of exercising a ministry in the Church, provide a divine indication to which the Church could not remain blind, under pain of rebellion?

No. This shortage on one side and these vocations on the other side are certainly an invitation to the Church, but not an invitation to choose the easiest, the most comfortable, the most limited solution. This shortage and these vocations, on the contrary, seem to me to be

an invitation to think out a solution which is theologically and ecumenically acceptable, and which—if we dared to take it—would help us to resolve many problems.

This brings us to the second and much shorter part of this paper.

### (I)

Contrary to what is often stated, the refusal to ordain women to the pastoral ministry certainly does not mean the refusal to entrust to women a ministry in the Church and to ordain them to it. Only that it is to be a ministry other than the pastoral ministry. But which? In fact, despite some theological hesitation in regard to the ministry of elders and deacons, our confessional tradition has no knowledge, or at any rate scarcely any knowledge, of any other genuine, acknowledged, ordained ministry than the pastoral ministry. This is undoubtedly one of the reasons why we cannot conceive of entrusting to women an authentic ministry other than this one ministry which we know of in our tradition. Now there is another one, attested to by the New Testament (cf. Rom. 16,1), known to the Early Church, more or less still alive in certain confessional traditions, capable of abundant ramifications, and which is intended for men as for women: *the ministry of the Diaconate*. There is no question of going into the history of it here; it is simply a matter of stating on the one hand the advantage which we should gain by rediscovering it, and of showing on the other hand, in an outline way, how it could be exercised by women. My brevity will be excused, because it is not on this problem that the Commission on the Pastoral Ministry has requested an article from me.

To rediscover the diaconal ministry would be essentially profitable for us, for the four following reasons:

The first is that this rediscovery would allow us at last to take seriously so many vocations which God is directing to women, and of reverencing these vocations by acknowledging the women in a spiritual way and by ordaining them with prayer and the laying on of hands to the service of the Lord in the Church. So many women who today are longing to serve Jesus Christ as parish helpers, as "women ministers," as social assistants, as nurses, as teachers, could find the respect to which they are entitled by the grace which has been granted them, by being ordained to the diaconal ministry. Feminine vocations could cease to be embarrassing in such cases for the Church, and some slight compensation could be made for the spiritual exploitation of so many women.

The second reason why it would be profitable to us to rediscover the diaconal ministry is that this rediscovery would allow us to see at last what we mean, when it comes down to practicalities, by talking so much about the diversity of ministries and doing so little about the matter. I believe further (following the same train of thought) that this rediscovery would also clarify the problem of the relationship between the ministers (pastors and deacons/deaconesses) and the laity, by way of showing that there is in actual fact a distinction

between them, and that for profoundly theological reasons this distinction must be preserved. I give these reasons without qualification or explanation. I believe first of all that the ministry belongs to the christological order and the laity to the pneumatological order. One can therefore no more confuse them than one can confuse the Son and the Spirit, but one can no more set them in opposition than one can set the Son and the Spirit in opposition; next I believe that the specific task of the ministry is to build up the Church and to replenish the laity, and the specific task of the laity is to take part in the Eucharist, and in the working of grace in the Church, and to sanctify the world by being Light and Salt. The rediscovery of the diaconate would only mean that we were taking seriously the diversity of ministries about which we discourse so much, but at the same time, we should disencumber the Church of so many lay people who are falling all over themselves to perform some "ministerial" task, by allowing them to involve their faith and life in the *world*.

The third reason why we should do well to rediscover the diaconal ministry is that it would allow us to relieve the pastoral shortage in an intelligent way, and that it would facilitate at the same time certain reforms in parochial structure which are urgent. I will explain. The unfortunate effect of the Enlightenment, which we have discussed—and which has sometimes found parochial structures which seemed to be waiting for it—has been to provide us with parishes in which the number of pastors is determined by the number of parishioners or by the number of tasks to be performed. To put it irreverently; you employ the staff corresponding to the importance of the job. And the pastor loses an important part of his prestige (which is not so serious), but also of his genuine pastoral ministry (which is more so). By rediscovering the diaconal ministry, it would be possible to satisfy at last a fundamental demand for the remodelling of the Church's structures; that there shall be one pastor for a congregation. If he cannot manage the task, then he is to have the assistance of deacons and deaconesses in places where the assistance of young pastors as curates cannot be provided and where this is not desired. I cannot help thinking that if there is a pastoral shortage, it is in a large measure because there is, in certain parishes, a bottleneck of pastors. If these parishes were emptied, not only should we find without difficulty enough pastors to have one in each parish, but also—most important—we could replace the pastors who have been withdrawn with deacons and deaconesses. And this, instead of weakening and breaking up those parishes, would strengthen their unity and help towards their harmonious edification.

There would still be a fourth advantage in restoring among us the diaconal ministry; we should then be able to do justice to the institutions of deaconesses which made their appearance in the nineteenth century but which, up to now, have not yet been properly integrated into the Church's life. There is, in regard to these institutions, a work of investigation and recognition which requires attention. This would

not make them lose their particular character, but would allow them to revive the vocation to them, by increasing the diaconal "functions" for which these institutions would be fitted.

## (II)

How could this diaconal ministry be exercised by women? Simply by way of indication, I set out four possible patterns:

There is first of all the pattern of community life, with vows of obedience, poverty, and celibacy which community life normally implies. The mother house could then offer the Church deaconess companies (fraternities) of three or four sisters, who would be engaged in various aspects of the diaconate in such an urban parish or such a district of a rural parish.<sup>1</sup>

There is next the pattern of community life without monastic vows. Here also, one would have three or four deaconesses who, in a common life regulated by common Offices, would discharge the duties of the diaconate in a parish or a group of parishes; one would catechise the school children, one would give her attention to the sick, the third would look after enquiries and social proceedings, a fourth could be engaged in the management of a college or a professional school, another again could maintain the daily administration of the parish, etc.

Why does this diaconate have to be conceived in the shape of the common life? Basically for two reasons. The first is that this ministry is arduous, and if it needs to be exercised with a measure of independence, to ensure a definite responsibility, it must not condemn those who undertake it to isolation. The second—and there is no reason to pass over it in silence—is that it is important to establish these deaconesses from the emotional point of view. Neither for the pastor of the parish, nor for his wife, nor for the parochial assistant or secretary, is it a good thing that a different relationship should be set up for the ministry than for married life. Everyone will be more at ease if the pastor, in regard to what concerns the diaconate and the parish administration, has to deal with a community of deaconesses rather than one single deaconess. (It is not a good thing to provide pastors with individual secretaries!)

In the third place, there is the pattern where work is temporarily curtailed. Deaconesses who have not made monastic vows have the right to marry, and they should be able to do it without their marriage deflecting them from their vocation, apart from no longer being able to exercise it full time. They would therefore keep their rights while withdrawing from their post or while exercising their office only on a part-time basis (such as responsibility for a group of mothers, evenings devoted to a club for students or trainees, care of some sick people, etc.). (*Note:* To avoid enlarging the number of married deacon-

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*Note:* <sup>1</sup> Cf. The Deaconess Community of St. Andrew, in the Church of England. Ed.

esses, would it not be necessary to wait, before ordaining those who have not the vocation to celibacy, until they reach 30 years?)

Finally we must ask if, in an outline for proposals, we ought not to receive into the diaconal ministry the wives of pastors (and of deacons) who request it because they wish to be able to carry out the tasks which they accept in the parishes with full recognition and with the knowledge that the Church is praying for them. I think that many of the spiritual troubles of pastors' wives could be avoided or mitigated, if those who request it, and who are found suitable and capable, could abandon the exceedingly ambiguous position which is theirs and undertake a genuine and recognized ministry.

This list shows the variety of posts which could be recognized by the Church by means of ordination to the diaconate; medical posts from nurse or midwife to doctor of medicine, educational posts from nursery helper to college lecturer, social posts from social worker to sociologist, administrative posts from secretary to economist, and legal and theological posts as well.

In order to provide a framework and a proper place for all these forms of the diaconate, two measures would need to be taken, of which the first would be desirable, while the second would be indispensable: the Church would have to require of all deaconesses and organize for them one year of study, which would allow them to gain a basic theological education, regulated by examinations; in the process of rediscovering the diaconal ministry, the Church would have to rediscover at the same time its traditional liturgical functions:—the reading of Holy Scripture, the conducting of the Church's intercessions, and the distribution of the eucharistic species. Such a rediscovery ought not to be an administrative measure, but the implanting of a ministry into the source of the Church's life.

In the foregoing, I have attempted to state why it appears to me that the Church has not the right to ordain women to the pastoral ministry: first because such ordination would be false to the Church and the pastoral ministry, next because it would be inconsistent with Christian anthropology, and finally because it would endanger ecumenical efforts, pursuits, and hopes.

But we have seen that this refusal by no means involves the refusal to entrust to women a genuine ministry and to ordain them to it, that on the contrary this refusal is an urgent summons to rediscover the grace and the various forms of the diaconal ministry.

The alternative therefore appears plain and simple. It is quite as clear that the choice which the Church is called upon to make entirely involves her faithfulness to Jesus Christ. If she chooses to ordain women to the pastoral ministry, I am convinced that she is swerving from the truth and is even endangering her ecclesial nature (*ecclesialité*). If she chooses to revive the diaconal ministry, in order to be able to respect and welcome the vocation which God directs to women, I am convinced that she is serving truth. It is in *this* direction, then, that the Church must proceed.

# Women and Ordination: A Mediating View

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Professor Macquarrie is the author of a number of important works in theology, e.g. *Principles of Christian Theology*, and is recognized as an authority on Heidegger and Bultmann.

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I hope I may be excused for beginning this article by quoting one of my own writings. In my *Principles of Christian Theology*, published in 1966, I wrote: "Sex is one of the 'worldly' disqualifications specifically abolished, along with race and social status, in the Christian community. I can find no valid theological objections to the ordination of women." I went on to suggest that a beginning might be made by assimilating deaconesses to the order of deacons, and since this order is continuous with those above it, there could be in principle no barrier to advancement on the ground of sex alone. However, on this question I also declared quite forcibly: "One must wait for the development of a consensus within the Church as a whole, in all its major branches. It would be a divisive step for one diocese, one regional church, or even one communion, to act unilaterally in this matter. It is to be hoped that such a consensus may sometime be reached."<sup>1</sup>

The point of view which I expressed is not one which is likely to commend itself to those who feel strongly one way or the other in the continuing disputes over the question of the ordination of women. Those who have deep conscientious problems about women in the ministry may think that I have too readily conceded the theological case, while those who are committed to the cause of opening up the ministry to women may think that I am temporizing and being needlessly ambivalent. But after six years I still find myself holding to the position stated above, and I firmly believe that it is the correct position for the Anglican communion to adopt at this time. And let me add that it is not

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<sup>1</sup>*Principles of Christian Theology*, John MacQuarrie, published by Charles Scribner & Sons, page 386.

just an Anglican compromise. It is a position that allows openness and flexibility toward the future, while at the same time it urges us to have the modesty to listen carefully to the arguments of those who—with two thousand years of tradition on their side!—resist the proposed change. If we are prepared to listen to each other, then I think that we shall eventually see our way forward. A *kairos* or time of decision will be possible, and it could be beneficial for the whole Church. But a premature settling of the problem imposed by a majority vote could be distasteful for all concerned.

The Lambeth Conference of 1968 called for careful study of the question. Unfortunately, there is little evidence that such study has taken place. The literature put out by both sides simply repeats old arguments—indeed some of it has consisted of reprints of articles written on the occasion of earlier controversies over this matter. But there are new areas waiting to be explored. What, for instance, is one to say about the psychological differences between the sexes, and the way in which the different relationship to the father profoundly affects the way of perceiving moral obligation? The Christian implications of this have to some extent been explored by such writers as R. S. Lee, but it still remains to ask what it has to say about the roles of the sexes in ministry and priesthood.<sup>2</sup> Obviously, there is no simple answer. Do the undoubted differences mean that women are inherently unsuited for priesthood? Or do these very differences mean that women can complement the priesthood of men by introducing a new dimension of consciousness? Beyond this lies the bigger question of the theology of sex, a study of sexuality that will go beyond questions of psychology, biology, sociology and the like to ask about the fundamental meaning of human sexuality. Only a few Christian writers (e.g., Nicholas Berdyaev) have studied this question in any depth. And even if this question is answered, there would still be the question of whether the specific gifts of women would be best fulfilled in the ordained ministry or in some other way—a question of some importance at a time when we are recapturing the understanding of the total ministry of the Church and realizing that it is not to be identified with the ordained ministry.

An adequate exploration of these questions requires a long time. I should certainly have thought that no worthwhile study could be completed before the next Lambeth Conference (1978) when the bishops of the entire Anglican communion, with a well considered and balanced report in front of them, might be able to take counsel together and reach some agreed policy. One would certainly hope that however they might decide, most Anglicans would be willing to go along with them, recognizing that there had been proper study, consultation and responsible decision in the face of God.

But alas! these calm procedures seem to take too much time for the more impatient among us. Yet what is the point of trying to gain two

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<sup>2</sup> *Man: Fallen or Free*, edited by E. Kemp, published by Hodder & Stoughton, page 54.



or three years if in fact no real agreement is reached and the Church remains divided over the issue? There is something of a parallel in the case of the Church of South India. That church was brought into being before some matters had been properly settled and clarified. A delay of a few years might well have produced a church and ministry universally recognized. But in fact for a quarter of a century there has existed a church of ambiguous status, with what can only be called first and second class ministries. The strains and stresses of this situation have been divisive for all concerned, not least for the Church of South India itself. One can visualize a similar situation if some provinces or dioceses of the Church proceed to ordain women who are not permitted (or invited) to function throughout the Church as a whole.

Thus, although I am willing to believe that further study may well indicate the theological permissibility or even a kind of theological imperative for the ordination of women in our time, I would regard it as an offence against collegiality if any particular regional church or diocese took unilateral action before a responsible consensus had been reached. It should be noted that this is not merely a practical objection—it is theological, for it is based on the principle of collegiality. On a matter of such grave importance as this, the Church must act with a common mind—a common mind first among the bishops, but also among clergy and laity. In practical terms, a common mind might mean a two-thirds majority in each of the three houses, with perhaps a 75% majority overall. (These are the figures which the Church of England set up in its consideration of the Anglican-Methodist reunion scheme. The fact that these majorities were not obtained was taken as a sign that the proposed scheme did not command a sufficient consensus.)

In these ecumenical days, we have to look wider afield and consider how our actions will affect other branches of the Church. One of the remarkable signs of ecumenical progress in recent years has been the extraordinary measure of agreement reached in the international talks between Anglicans and Roman Catholics. The next subject for discussion will be the ministry, and it is recognized that it will be harder to reach agreement on this issue than on most of the others, even the Eucharist. Of course, in the Roman Catholic Church too there is a lobby advocating the ordination of women, but no one who is realistic about the matter expects that this will happen in the foreseeable future. How then would the ordination of women in the Anglican communion affect our relations with Rome? No one can say for certain, but the importance of the issue must not be minimized. I myself find it necessary to pay attention to the statement of Bishop B. C. Butler, one of the leaders of the Roman Catholic delegation and a man most deeply sympathetic to Anglicanism. He has made it clear that his position is very like the one I have advocated. He has an open mind on the theological question about the ordination of women, but he does not think that the *kairos* has come, and he believes that unilateral action at this time will inevitably place another obstacle in the way of Anglican-Roman Catholic agreement.

In sum, then, I am asking for study, patience and charity, and that both sides should avoid anything that smacks of propaganda and self-righteousness. An act done in haste and through political pressures will be satisfactory to no one and may bring many grave consequences. An act done after full reflection and consultation will be loyally accepted by all reasonable people, even if it goes against their earlier opinions.

# The "Open Mind" and the Mind of Christ

By the REV. JOHN PAUL BOYER

This article was written for the May 1973 issue of *AVE*, a monthly bulletin of the Church of Saint Mary the Virgin, New York City.

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The quest for women's ordination, it dawned on me recently, though vastly important in terms of its possible ramifications, is in itself only a symptom of a deeper malaise in the life of the Church—a malaise which is the result of a crisis of *authority* only now beginning to be recognized. This realisation—that the women's ordination issue was only one aspect of a many-sided phenomenon—was the result of my recently reading a collection of essays from England dealing with the ordination question from a number of angles. I am speaking of *Why Not?: Priesthood and the Ministry of Women*, edited by G. E. Duffield and the late Michael Bruce, and published by The Marcham Manor Press at Sutton Court-nay, England. The book is interesting from a number of standpoints. It represents, for one thing, a remarkable degree of consensus and co-operation between Churchmen of both "Evangelical" and "Anglo-Catholic" background. For another thing, the Evangelical contributors are by no means all Anglican; among their number are some highly respected Continental Protestants. Nor are the contributors all clergymen (with a vested interest, perhaps). This renders all the more striking the general conclusion of the book, reached in the main by closely reasoned exegesis of Scripture, that women have a definite ministry in the Church (including the diaconate), and that that ministry is not the priesthood.

I found the book interesting, and in many respects conclusively persuasive. Viewed against the ordination debate as it is being carried on in the American Church, however, I also found it strangely saddening; for I fear that most American churchmen will find its arguments almost totally irrelevant to the discussion going forward in this country. Certainly those who are already persuaded of the rightness of ordaining women to the priesthood and the episcopate will find it so. The reason lies precisely in the book's *scriptural* grounding, for nothing has so

clearly revealed the bankruptcy of the old Anglican principle of the doctrinal sufficiency of Scripture (and its consequent authority) as the current debate. It is the purpose of this paper to examine some of the reasons for this, and to indicate some of the consequences for the Anglican Churches—which have always proclaimed that “the Holy Scriptures contain all Doctrine required as necessary for eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ” (Book of Common Prayer, P. 542, *passim*)—if the trend continues.

It is first necessary, I suspect, to substantiate the charge: that scriptural authority has in fact been eroded in the Episcopal Church. I am afraid that one’s evaluation here must necessarily be somewhat subjective; it is not, after all, a situation easy to document, though the impunity with which prominent clerics in the past two decades have challenged, in print, such fundamental doctrines of Christian orthodoxy as the Trinity, the Virgin Birth, the unique divinity of Christ, or, in one or two cases, the very *existence* of God—as separable from human “progress” and social welfare—ought to give one pause. Pike, Van Buren, and Altizer (the last a layman), though *passé* now, were much in vogue in the sixties and were taken with all seriousness in many theological circles. And a committee of the House of Bishops solemnly declared that there is now no such thing as heresy, which is the same thing as saying that there is now no such thing as a fixed standard of Christian truth which can be appealed to in controversy, or against which various proposals (such as this one of the ordination of women to the priesthood) can be measured.

It ought not to be necessary, though the climate of the times has made it so, to remark that such an observation does *not* mean that one is calling for a “heresy hunt”; on the contrary, we need freedom of discussion, provided it can be got to work both ways. My own seminary experience, for example, gave ample evidence of the degree to which the “orthodoxy” of theological liberalism imposes its own unofficial pressures to conform; and in the present crisis the spectacle of the national Church’s officialdom marshalling their not inconsiderable resources to sway the outcome would render laughable any claims of impartiality were the situation, on the contrary, not frightening. (I wonder, indeed, if it is as well known as it ought to be that these resources include considerable financial grants from various official and quasi-official Church bodies to subsidize persons going about the country to “educate”—read “propagandize”—both clergy and laity.) At least in the case of the clergy, I doubt there is anyone who has lived through the last fifteen years or so who is unaware of the extent to which the various crises which have confronted us, both on the ideological and the practical plane, have *not* been resolved by reference to what used to be *the* Anglican criterion: Scripture interpreted by reason in the light of the tradition of the undivided Church. The popular theological reductionism of writers like Pike or, in England, J. A. T. Robinson was defended by their many admirers, *not* because it represented a true distillation of the biblical message (which would have been controversial, but tolerable)

but because, willy-nilly, it represented what people were supposed to want, i.e., a "de-mythologized", "religionless", non-supernatural humanism. That it was not what they wanted—a fact of which the charismatic movement, the "Jesus Movement", and the various esoteric eastern cults give some evidence—is neither here nor there. The *principle* was that we must give the people what they want, not what God has told them they ought to have; and the assumption, of course, is that God has not, after all, told them (or us) anything at all. It is to the credit of the laity that they are still capable of being scandalized by this sort of thing when they are confronted with it; the clergy, alas, were long ago anesthetized, to the extent that each theological novelty, however patently out of step with the basic tenets of the Christian religion, must be given solemn consideration in the name of the "open-mind". We have had our outrage threshold raised so high that we (and I include myself in this) are no longer capable of real indignation in the face of obvious nonsense. We solemnly debate and learnedly consider things which might better be dismissed with a derisive snort.

This is not to say that I think the ordination of women question ought to be dismissed with a snort. Quite the contrary. I think the Church must do some serious re-thinking about human sexuality on all levels, and about the expression of that sexuality in the light of increased knowledge of how men and women actually "tick" sexually. Further, we must do some equally heavy re-thinking about the nature of "Order" in the Church, and about the nature of vocation and the nature of priesthood. And, underlying the whole business, we must re-think, most of all, the nature of "Church" itself (or *herself!*).

This, however, is precisely what is *not* being done. The ordination of women to the priesthood is being put before the Church, instead, as an essentially *political* question, and the issue is one of the distribution of *power*. It has truly been remarked by more than one observer that many women do not seem so much to want to be priests as to be rectors, i.e., to be in positions of authority comparable to those men can attain, not (which is the essential function of priesthood, however "spiritualized") to offer sacrifice.

The decision whether women ought to be admitted to the circles of power which supposedly belong to male priests is to be made, we are told, by the Church speaking through the General Convention—"Church" in this case clearly meaning the *national* Church and not the Church of the Creeds—"One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic"; "decision" meaning "arrived at by majority vote". We hear nothing about the *consensus fidelium* which used to be thought necessary for decisive changes of direction in the Church's life. We do not even hear anything about a *large* majority, as when it was determined beforehand that the Church of England ought not to proceed to organic union with the Methodist Church, unless the measure carried by something like a majority of seventy-five percent. We certainly do not hear of any responsibility to Christendom beyond the borders of the United States or beyond the confines of our own "denomination", except in the disingen-

uous appeals to the example of "other" Protestant Churches—which do not have priests in the first place, and do not want them. No, the whole business is treated as simply a domestic matter, and as an issue which can be decided by simple majority vote.

And why is it being pushed at all? In response to the imperatives of Scripture and the demands of universal Christian tradition? No, but simply because certain vocal women demand it, and because the principle still applies: "Give the people what they want." If enough people want it, it is right. If it is consonant with predominant interests in the secular world—such as "Women's Lib", which seems to be to the early seventies roughly the sort of unarguable, axiomatic imperative that "religionless Christianity" was deemed to be in the sixties—then it is doubly right. And one can always find some scriptural *justification* for it.

That, of course, is the point. Scripture still has its uses as an *ex post facto* tidier-up of ecclesiastical quibbles which disturb people like me, but Scripture has no *authority*, and its general tenor (which on this issue is virtually unanimous) can be safely ignored. If Galatians 3:28 can buttress the argument, by all means use it. Is it out of context?—which it is, having nothing to do with Holy Order and everything to do with Holy Baptism—no matter, use it anyway. Did the same author have more explicit things to say in I Corinthians 11 and I Corinthians 14? Did he (or whoever) have some important things to say about Holy Matrimony in the Epistle to the Ephesians?—which show that there are limits to the application of "neither male nor female"—no matter, they can be dismissed as the "time-conditioned" prejudices of a sexual neurotic. Is the entire Old Testament tradition weighted against a female priesthood?—though quite receptive to great female leaders in other areas—no matter, its authors were primitive barbarians, unable to appreciate, it would seem (since it is the basis of their excluding women from the service of the altar), the psychological profundities expressed through the fertility aspects of the pagan cults.

But to change the images, you might argue, is to change the religion; no matter, you will be answered, the ancient Hebrews were wrong to concentrate so much on masculine images for God, and we might well learn something from the more tolerant atmosphere of Baal and Ash-taroath. It is in this spirit, of course, that a New York parish recently undertook to rewrite the liturgy, removing the masculine pronouns and changing all references to "Father" and "Son" to neutral (and comparatively impersonal) equivalents like "Creator" and "Redeemer". But did not Christ himself, in spite of his rather extraordinarily liberated and liberating attitude towards women in his own time, limit the apostolate to men? And did not those first apostles choose only men when they extended and continued their office in the Orders of Bishop and Presbyter (but making a distinction in the case of the diaconate)? Yes, indeed, you will be told, but the apostles were simple, unsophisticated men, who blindly accepted the mores of their time; and Jesus himself, after all, was limited by his first-century background—never mind that

it apparently pleased God to become incarnate in the first century instead of the twentieth; we all know what century sets the standards. Lest the reader conclude these arguments to be merely fanciful or, worse, invidious, let me hasten to assure him that they have, without exception, been used in my presence with deadly seriousness. The implications are that no standards of Christian faith and practice exist, except such standards as we supply; and that when Scripture confronts modern presupposition, it is Scripture which must be argued away. Certainly Scripture is no longer thought of as being determinative of value; our values, rather, determine its interpretation, and when the two are not consonant, it is Scripture which must give place.

Why? I like to fancy myself in moments of extreme self-confidence something of a biblical critic, albeit on an entirely amateurish plane. So I hope it will not be thought that I am attacking critical study of the Scriptures *in itself*. Far less am I advocating a kind of neo-fundamentalism. Obscurantism is not an answer to much of anything. I do think, however, that the crumbling of scriptural authority can be laid at the door of *biblical criticism as it is commonly understood by the average seminarian at the present time and by such priests as have already been trained under the current system*. Ten years' association with the theological faculties and theological students, in one place or another, has convinced me that—though such is hardly the desire (for the most part) of the instructors involved—*most* seminarians, armed with the elementary tools of such sophisticated techniques as form criticism, redaction criticism, and the like, have formed the conclusion (by and large unconscious) that there is almost nothing in the biblical record which can really be trusted. In the Bible, nothing, as it were, is *safe*; and nothing, after all, can be predicated upon nothing.

This is by no means to say that Scripture is not valued in these circles; on the contrary, it is valued highly: as inspiration, as drama, as colorful narrative, as a deposit of wisdom which can be mined for what it is worth. But it is not valued as an authority, or as a determinative standard of normative practice or normative doctrine. There is, rather, a settled habit of scepticism, which presumes that every narrative, every event, every personage (almost) is up for grabs—for is it not true that somewhere or other, some time or other, some scholar or other has questioned the "validity" or the "authenticity" or the "historicity" of almost every verse in the Bible? And not only are the Gospels not exempt from this process, they are, rather, especially exposed to it, partly because critics (like other people) often have an axe to grind, and seek their justification by honing the central documents of Christian authority to such a fineness that the blade cuts in one direction only—their own; partly for the very commendable reason that Christian scholars have been anxious to avoid even the appearance of special pleading when it comes to the elucidation of Christian claims or the explication of the documents upon which (in part) those claims are based.

The result, however, is a generation of clerics who are convinced, although usually only semi-consciously (which makes the error more

difficult to correct) that we cannot know anything definite about Jesus of Nazareth *at all*; and further—now that the Acts of the Apostles are no longer considered “historical” by the “advanced” critics either—that we can know about the practice of the earliest Church only what can be gleaned from the four or five letters of the Apostle Paul which are indisputably “genuine”. After all, if every saying of Jesus, if every event of his life, if every action attributed to him, was the invention of the primitive Church, wholly coloured and conditioned and chosen and shaped by their needs in profound disregard of the historical facts—not so much the “reminiscences of the Apostles” (as Justin Martyr called the Gospels) as the creation, from the point of view of a particular life-situation (*Sitz im Leben*), of the Hellenistic Christian community—what basis of authority *can* remain? Admittedly, this is an extreme formulation of the “advanced” position, but it is one which Prof. Bultmann, for one, has had the courage forthrightly to state, and some of his English-language popularizers have certainly not been shy to trumpet the obvious implications in the name of theological “honesty.” It is true, of course, that a great deal of re-thinking is currently being done in the light of our vastly increased knowledge of first-century Palestinian Judaism (including the so-called “Dead Sea Scrolls”). And it is by no means so clear, as once it seemed, what is or what is not “Hellenistic” and late, or “Jewish” and early (hence, authentic), or, what Jesus, as a first-century Jew, can or cannot have done or said or thought. But this reevaluation comes too late for the two generations or so of clergymen who were raised on the assumptions of the earlier critical orthodoxy, and the scepticism underlying much current theological thought remains—a potent, if unacknowledged, barrier to the recovery of scriptural norms.

The question is, is such scepticism necessary, or even valid? The mistake is essentially one of logic, of leaping to conclusions about the whole because of conclusions about some of the parts. We are not concerned to deny that the process of formulating the Gospels (which are our particular concern here) was both complex and eclectic. *Of course* the selection of what was remembered about Jesus was partial; he must certainly have said much which was lost. *Of course* what was remembered was what particularly fitted the needs of the first-century Church, and it may very fairly be granted that those needs shaped not only the choice of material but the way it was presented (including editorial additions or “improvements”). *Of course* theological considerations played their part in the way the framework was arrived at, and *of course* the Easter faith was read back into the pre-resurrection events. It is the proper task of biblical criticism, moreover, to examine and evaluate all these “of courses” to recover so far as is possible the actual processes which led to the Gospels as we now have them. No responsible Churchman would wish to deny this, certainly not the present writer.

The “of courses”, however, do not add up to a convincing denial of a central core of actual reminiscence and, hence, of actual history.



When all allowances have been made for the sorts of distortions which accompany any orally transmitted tradition (though ancient Semites were rather more careful about handing on their traditions intact than book-dependent Americans or Europeans would be), the fact remains that we know as much about Jesus of Nazareth, and in many cases more, as we know about any other ancient figure of comparable stature. I have not come across any denial of this in biblical-critical literature which could not be demonstrated, on examination, to be the result, not of factors inherent in the material evidence itself, but of a priori philosophical (*not* historical) presuppositions on the part of the critic. No other ancient documents are treated with the kind of suspicion exhibited by New Testament critics towards the Gospels, and one is led to the rather reluctant conclusion that this is so because the alternatives to scepticism are intolerably frightening to the liberal Protestant mind. If, after all, nothing can be known with any sureness about the real Christ, one can make an abstract Christ who represents the sum of the human ideal, whatever that ideal may be at any particular moment. Thus we have had successively the "nineteenth-century-liberal Christ", the "social-gospel Christ", and of late, the "Marxist-revolutionary Christ". But if, on the contrary, one must confront, not an abstract ideal, but a real *person*—with real purposes, a real will, and a real mind of his own—then the foundations are indeed shaken, and our smug preconceptions, our easy compromises with the predominant intellectual and emotional currents of contemporary culture, our alliances with whatever is fashionably "progressive" at any given moment, are threatened with death.

Both the assault on scriptural authority and the drive to ordain women to the priesthood, which is but one of its many consequences, provide a case in point. Once you have made the *real* Christ unknowable, you are free, in almost Gnostic fashion, to worship Christ the Ideal Man—or, rather, Jesus Christ becomes for you the *symbol* of whatever you humanly admire—and since (by common consent) the priest represents Christ to the Church, you can argue, as is indeed being argued currently, that a woman (as a full human being) can represent that "Christ" to the Church as well as a man—which is undeniably true. That "Christ," however, is not the Christ of the Gospels, who was (and is) a concrete, particular *person*—and who happened to be male, as were his chosen apostles, their chosen successors, and every priest and bishop in the Church Catholic for two thousand years. *Of course* a woman can represent "humanity" as well as a man; but Christians do not worship "humanity," they worship the Christ of God, the only-begotten *Son* of the *Father*, the Word made Flesh of the womb of Mary his (female) Mother in the person of (the male) Jesus of Nazareth, in the reign of Augustus Caesar, in the village of Bethlehem-Judah, when the world was made new. And sexual egalitarianism is profoundly irrelevant to that!

This essay is about the "open mind" and the *mind of Christ*. If Christ is only Ideal Man, of course, he *has* no mind at all, save such a mind as

collective current opinion chooses to give him; and if that is true, it would be arrogant in the extreme to have any other attitude *but* an "open mind." Only so could we hope to hit upon any small islands of truth in a sea of subjectivism. If, however, Christ is what the Christian religion has always claimed, the "open mind" itself becomes a kind of arrogance, for it presumes, after all, that the opinion of Christ can be corrected or amplified by "further information." There is a sense, of course, in which *none* of us knows the mind of Christ and in which it would be presumptuous, if not blasphemous, to pretend we did—though the advocates of women's ordination, to return to our paradigmatic example, *do* claim to know Christ's mind on this level, and find that it is in remarkable agreement with their own; i.e., they claim to know what "ideal humanity" *ought* to think, and presume, therefore, that he *did* think it, or that he *would* have thought it had he the good fortune to have been born in the twentieth century instead of the first.

But to say that we do not know the mind of Christ, in the sense that we cannot claim to know everything he thought or intended, is not to say that we cannot know *anything* of what he thought or intended. "For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?," said St. Paul to the Corinthians (quoting the Septuagint version of Isaiah 40:13), "But we have the mind of Christ" (I Corinthians 2:16). When all is said and done, and when all allowances have been made, certain undeniable facts remain, which there is not a shred of evidence to deny. One is that Jesus treated women with extraordinary freedom for his own day, and invested them with new and lasting dignity. We need only think of his conversations with Mary of Bethany, his colloquy with the woman at the well in Samaria, his choice of Mary Magdalene and other women as the first witnesses of his resurrection—all in a day when it was considered outrageous for women to address a man in public, and when their evidence was not acceptable in a court of law—to realise how *little* this mind was affected by the social mores of his own society. Whether every detail of any of these stories is "authentic" is beside the point—they record a remembered *attitude*, which there would have been no call to remember had it not been an attitude habitual to the person portrayed in them. And yet to balance this there is another fact: in spite of everything, he chose only men for apostleship. Could it be that his notion of apostolic priesthood concurred more with what came to be Catholic tradition than is commonly supposed? That the tradition might even have taken shape in *response* to his intention, and not (as liberal Protestants have always assumed) in deviation from it? That he meant the priesthood to be not merely functional, but *incarnational* and *representative*?

Be that as it may, it is one thing to question the mind of Christ in the humble awareness that it must have contained more than we can ever know this side of eternity; but it is another thing altogether to question the mind of Christ as to its capacity or adequacy to deal with the future needs of his Church. And that, when all is said and done, is the deeper implication of what is being said by the advocates of women's ordina-

tion. Our answer is that we know as much of the mind of Christ as is *needful* and as he meant us to know for our salvation; that Holy Scripture, in spite of the increasingly thorough-going depreciation of its authority, is still our primary datum for knowledge of that mind's intention; that it is within the tradition of the Holy Church that the bent of the Holy Scripture can be best discerned (for it is to the *Church* that our Lord promised that Spirit which would lead us into all truth, and the Spirit is not alien to the Church, but rather indwells it and is itself responsible for the tradition being what it is). And further, neither in Scripture nor in any apostolic tradition whatever is there the slightest indication (a single remark of St. Paul about baptismal unity notwithstanding) that it was our Lord's wish that any other than a man plead before the Father that sacrifice of himself, as a man, which he made once-for-all on Calvary—which it has always been the priest's office, though in profound unworthiness, to re-present and re-call to the mind and in the midst of the Holy People of God.

There is no question here of "worthiness", but only of *appropriateness*: man is a natural symbol of Christ (as woman is of the Church) in the same sense that wine is a natural symbol of the Eucharist; and both are taken up into sacramental mystery and made, not symbols only, but effective signs or bearers of what they represent. This is consonant with the divine economy as it is revealed throughout the Gospels and the entire New Testament (and, for that matter, in much of the Old). This thread of appropriateness runs, indeed, through the entire history of salvation, and on all sides we see natural things taken up and used as vehicles of God's grace (as, in the beginning of the central mystery of all, we see woman also taken up, to become the historical God-bearer). Is it so very obstructionist to ask caution before this tradition is cast aside, before the God-bearing symbols become nothing more than labels for a functional, neatly rational caste of religious professionals? For that is what happens when the image of Christ (which is man) is confounded with the image of the Church (which is woman), and distinction and diversity are allowed no longer in the Church of God, to the impoverishment of us all, men and women alike.

Know the mind of Christ? Well, at least we do not think, in this instance, that we need to correct it.

# Speech to the Convention of the Diocese of Pennsylvania

By the REV. GEORGE WILLIAM RUTLER

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Fr. Rutler is a well-known preacher on both sides of the Atlantic and is known to non-Episcopalians in the Philadelphia area through frequent television appearances. He is the author of the book, *Priest and Priestess* (Trinity Press, Ambler, Pa.).

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In these few awkward moments of Convention time, after so much time discussing so much else, we are asked to help decide whether or not the Episcopal Church can legitimately continue. The alteration of the Canons of the Church to permit women to be called priest and bishop will mark the first time in our history as Episcopalians that we have by our own hand cancelled out our hard-defended right to be called Catholic. The Protestant Episcopal Church may try to continue as an Episcopal Church; it may continue as a protestant church. But it will not be able to continue as a branch of the Catholic and Apostolic Church. We are not voting against the ordination of women; we are voting for the apostolic ministry.

It must be said that these words will make little sense to many here now. The Diocese of Pennsylvania has a strong history of preaching the gospel and showing the love of Christ in countless ways, but our people rarely have understood and articulated the apostolic claims of the Episcopal Church. That has been to our own hindrance but it has been tolerable so long as official acknowledgment of the apostolic faith has been on our books. Soon we may lose those credentials. Most of our children are growing up without ever having heard of Richard Hooker or William Laud or John and Charles Wesley or Charles Simeon or Lord Halifax or Father Huntington; that means a twilight is falling on the Church. But soon our adults will be told to forget the Book of Acts, the Council of Nicaea and the solemn practice of two thousand years. They will be told to forget them in the name of justice and human rights

or social expediency or simple emotion. Whatever the reason, that means twilight will turn into night. We will then become a mere de-nomination. After that we shall have no reason to exist.

Changing the canons to call women priest and bishop is not a matter of personal rights and human justice. No one has a right to be a priest; it is a vocation and one finally judged not by society or private emotion but by the wisdom of the Church. Nor is the requirement of a particular sex for the ordained priestly function an arbitrary injustice. The Church carefully specifies sexual requirements in another sacrament as well, Holy Matrimony, and in both cases it is Christ's commands that are being followed. Just as He ordained that man marries woman and not man man nor woman woman, so He chose as the specific earthly continuers of His priesthood twelve men. To say He was bowing to social convention in choosing only men ignores the fact that priestesses were far more common in Semitic and Greek lore than they are now and that women from Deborah to Mary sang the greatest songs of Israel's salvation. But more important, here is Jesus who scandalized some by speaking to a Samaritan woman in public; here is Jesus who demanded co-operative fidelity between husband and wife; here is Jesus who broke law upon Levitical law and finally was crucified for that. Can we really pretend that Jesus' choice of only men as His apostles was the one instance in His entire life when He committed an injustice for the sake of expediency? True, the twelve apostles were all Jews, too; the Book of Acts gives authority for opening the apostolate to non-Jews. The choice of men was not incidental as was the choice of Jews.

God's choice of men for the ordained priesthood was no accident any more than His decision to live on earth as a man was an accident or His choice of bread and wine in the upper room was an accident. We are all priests, men and women, by baptism; and there is no reason why women cannot have every administrative and pastoral ministry open to men. What Christ consciously shut to women is the particular priesthood, the ordained priesthood of men who not only stand in the midst of the people but who, in the Eucharist, face the people as living images of God who thought it best to express His relationship to us as creator of the earth and of the sacraments by taking the form of a man. That may seem to us a stumbling block or foolishness; St. Paul said it would seem that way to the Greeks and the Jews, too.

We are dealing here with mysteries but they are real mysteries and we cannot ignore them. I do not know why God, who includes in His being maleness and femaleness together, thought it best to become a man, but He did. I do not know why God taught us to call Him not supreme being as Thomas Jefferson liked to do, and not Mother as the primitives liked to do, but Father; I do not know why, but He did. We shall find out why on the last day, when the pictures in the Book of Revelation begin to move. For the moment, on earth, we can only do what Christ taught us to do.

As I understand it, that is what prophecy means—showing the will of God. The resolution before this convention calling for the ordination of

women to the priesthood speaks the will of individuals. In its first clause it interprets a passage from St. Paul in a manner he himself did not intend. "In Christ there is neither male nor female." We also sing "In Christ there is no East or West" but that does not mean we expect to find pagodas in Sioux City. Paul is speaking of equality but equal does not mean interchangeable. In its second clause it speaks of sexuality as of no greater importance than race or nationality; that is contrary to the wills of both God and Sigmund Freud. In its third clause it cites a Lambeth Conference which did not vote for the ordination of women. In its selective citation of authorities it ignores such modern Anglican women as Dorothy Sayers and Evelyn Underhill and Margaret Mead. It also ignores the definitions of such crucial Anglican documents as the Lambeth Quadrilateral and the refutation of Pope Leo XIII's condemnation of Anglican orders by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York. In its fourth clause it introduces the ordination of women to the diaconate as a justification for women in the priesthood in spite of the fact that the diaconate is a theologically indifferent order when we are speaking of the priesthood. In its fifth clause it cites a 44 to 42 vote of the Anglican Consultative Council which has no canonical authority and which acted with the expressed disapproval of the Archbishop of Canterbury. In its final clause it cites the action of the Bishop of Hong Kong who ordained two women after the clergy of the province of Southeast Asia had unanimously refused permission to do so. In 1944, when a former Bishop of Hong Kong ordained a woman to the priesthood, Archbishop William Temple called for his repudiation and got it.

Now some are demanding that we alter by vote of General Convention ecumenical canons which cannot be altered by any General Convention. We shall, for the first time, be introducing something with no scriptural or apostolic justification. So these canons can only be altered by a truly ecumenical council of all the Catholic Churches, Roman and Orthodox as well. If that is not possible, then we can only conclude that it is the will of the Holy Spirit that it not be possible.

And in closing, let me say it may also be the will of the Holy Spirit that through this controversy real prophets once again rise up in the Church. We are told the Church is growing smaller because we have at last been preaching honest gospel. That is not so. The people have been asking for bread and we have been giving them stones. We have had false prophets long enough. Every time a church building has been shut we are told that it is the price of prophecy. In the last five years the number of baptized Episcopalians has fallen by over 300,000. We are told that is the price of prophecy. People have followed every wind of doctrine and we are told that is prophecy. Real prophecy does not close the doors of churches nor does it lose souls nor does it speak fashionable jargon. One hundred years ago the Episcopal Church grew fat by following fashion. Today we have grown very thin by following fashion. It is time we grew holy. And we cannot be holy until we stand up and say that the faith can indeed seem to men as well as women a stumbling block and foolish and lonely. It is lonely to be the only one

on one side of an issue with so many lining up to speak on the other side. You have asked for prophets in our time. God is raising them up. But they are not the ones who go about calling themselves prophets. They are young and old churchpeople together who know they have more to answer for than just the Episcopal Church in the United States. They have the whole apostolic faith. For every Louisville or Lambeth there are the councils of Jerusalem and Nicaea and all the councils of the centuries, and for every bishop of private persuasion there are all the bishops in the calendar. Those who say these things publicly are not going to find it easy because they are too radical for the self-styled radicals; their idea of the priestly profession is too deep for the most strident defenders of the clergy's professional rights, and their vision of humanity outdistances the humanitarian. Sometimes, like C. S. Lewis, they will write theology in the corners of pubs and say they belong to no party. Sometimes, like T. S. Eliot, they will enjoy shocking us by calling themselves classicists or even Anglo-Catholics. In the end they will not be dramatically martyred, but believing the priesthood to be something beyond the mere manipulation of parliamentary procedure, they will slowly be tightened out of the ecclesiastical establishment for having spoken of supernatural glory instead of mere good.

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